

Protecting your properties from civil unrest

Civil unrest has the potential to significantly impact communities across the nation. At times, commercial occupancies can become the targets of property damage, theft, and even the total destruction of the property. As a result, many organizations may be forced to close their facilities temporarily for the safety of employees, visitors, and customers.

Below are some considerations and tips to help keep your facilities safe and secure during periods of unrest. Note that this is an inclusive, but not exhaustive, list of recommendations which does not guarantee any result. Each organization must assess the constantly changing factors and considerations that are specific to their businesses.

General property conservation

- Stay up to date with all local and state government orders and directions related to imposed curfews and closures. Monitor local law enforcement alerts, social media, and news channels for information about protests, rallies, or other large gatherings that are planned or may be developing near your location. Considering the unpredictability of these events, it is important to take a proactive approach to protect your employees, visitors, customers, and properties, including securing your facility and ceasing operations until it is safe to resume normal business.
- Prepare for a potential delay from all emergency response agencies, including police, fire, and emergency medical services. Note that in certain situations, emergency response agencies will have to prioritize their responses, which could mean that fire alarm activations and calls about property damage/vandalism and those regarding non-violent crimes may not be considered a priority and responses may be delayed.
- Protect glass storefront systems and other large glass panes:
 - The installation of impact resistant window film for any glass storefront system is recommended as an overall security best practice. The main purpose is to delay and deny unauthorized entry through glass and to decrease the likelihood of projectiles from penetrating the glass. It is recommended to combine this with the board-up procedure outlined below to help prevent damage from projectiles used during a civil unrest event.
 - Consider boarding below grade and grade level windows and doors with a minimum of ½-inch plywood (preferably ¾-inch) to harden entrances and reduce the likelihood of unauthorized entry into the facility. This may also help to protect against small, medium, and large projectiles.
 - Plywood should be attached to exterior window framing systems or surrounding construction using course-threaded, tamper-proof screws or other highly secure connections at intervals that resist prying with tools. No gaps should be left between the plywood perimeter edges and the window frame system.
 - Board-up measures should not impact free egress through doors and should only cover glass panes within doors. Additional shields and guards should be provided to help protect vulnerable door hinges and latches.

- For additional security, chain link fence mesh can be run continuously over and attached to the plywood from grade level up to six feet above grade, interconnecting the plywood panels to provide reinforcement to the plywood.
- Recommended board-up procedures can be found from the [United States Fire Administration](#) and the [Federal Alliance for Safe Homes](#).
- Post “No Trespassing” signage around the entire facility.
- Graffiti prevention and mitigation measures should be taken for all of a building’s exterior, non-window vertical surfaces up to a minimum of 10 feet above finished grade.
 - Consider surrounding your building perimeter with temporary standoff fencing (construction style fencing) with mesh screening within the fence fabric. This fencing, which acts as a first layer of protection, should be installed close to the building so that there is not sufficient space for people to get between the fence and the building or comfortably move in that space. Fencing should be a minimum of eight feet above finished grade.
 - There are several anti-graffiti clear, top coatings, often consisting of Siloxane, on the market. Graffiti can typically be removed from walls covered with these coatings by pressured washing with water or graffiti can be wiped away with a solvent. These coatings should be applied to the exterior building envelope from grade level up to around 10 feet above finished grade. Follow application instructions provided by manufacturers. Many retail hardware stores and painting supply companies stock these products, and the majority can be applied with an airless spray gun.
- Ensure emergency response plans are up to date.
 - Review and update contact information/phone trees.
 - Make sure certain contact information for emergency response agencies is posted at a visible spot in each location.
 - Ensure fire department access boxes (Knox Box) have up-to-date facility information, keys, and access control credentials.
 - Civil unrest situations are fluid and evolve rapidly. Make plans that include securing and evacuating the premises as well as securing and sheltering in place if safe evacuation is not an option.
 - Have contact information and, optimally, a contract with local reputable salvage and board-up companies to provide emergency response to your location if the building envelope is penetrated.
- Consider videotaping and/or photographing (with a time and date stamp) the exterior and interior of the facility to document preventative security measures taken and the overall pre-existing condition of the facility and contents.
- If possible, consider emptying facilities of high-value assets and relocating items outside of the threatened area if it is safe to do so. If another location is not available, consider an offsite, secure storage facility located well outside the

confines of areas of civil unrest. This includes removing fine art, high-value merchandise, currency, vital hard copy records, as well as anything else considered irreplaceable or that contains sensitive, confidential and/or personally identifiable information.

- Empty cash drawers and leave empty drawers unlocked/open.
- Empty safes and leave them unlocked/open.
- If removing valuables from the site is not possible, consider placing the assets behind layers of protection (several locked doors/cages) and securing the valuables in approved fire-resistant safes/cabinets.
- Remove all combustible materials (such as pallets, trash/recycling cans, and gas cylinders) and potential projectiles/debris (including loose cinder blocks, bricks, large stones, and bottles) from around the outside of the building. Lock dumpsters and chain them in place.
- Ensure fixed fire suppression, security, and fire alarm systems are fully functional and connected to two independent communications mediums (radio, cellular, digital communicator, etc.) that can alert your third-party monitoring agency.
- Make sure all building exits are operating normally. Note that, according to model building codes, you may not modify building exits even if the building is evacuated. For example, exterior doors may not be chained.
- Test your emergency communications systems (SMS text, RSS feeds, auto-dialing, email, etc.). This may include asking employees to confirm receipt of test messages.
- Consider suspending all shipping and receiving operations or making alternative arrangements for delivery services.
- Ensure all facility fuel tanks are topped off, including, but not limited to, diesel backup generators and diesel fire pumps.

Site security

- Consider using barriers, surveillance, and lighting to deter, detect, and delay illegal access into a facility.
 - Make sure that site intrusion detection and video surveillance systems are fully operational and able to transmit to your third-party monitoring agency.
 - Disable all electronic access control system door and gate auto unlocking/opening programs.
 - Survey perimeter fences to make sure they are in good condition. This includes fence mesh and barbed wire topper, and ensuring there are no gaps at ground level. Consider installing temporary construction-style perimeter fencing a minimum of six feet high to secure loading docks and other vulnerable exterior locations.
 - All perimeter doors and windows should be closed, locked, and boarded up as outlined above.
 - Pedestrian and vehicle access gates should be closed and locked.
 - Post contact information for the security operations center (SOC) or on-call staff on all gates and entrance doors in case first responders need emergency access.

- Ensure that all perimeter cameras are fully functional and remotely viewable via laptop or cellular device. If you do not already have a fixed surveillance system, install an off-the-shelf, battery-powered, Wi-Fi capable system temporarily. Also, make sure to turn on any intrusion detection alerts provided by your video surveillance system.

All surveillance footage should have remote or cloud backup. If this is not possible, consider having the network or digital video recorders backed up at an offsite location to preserve surveillance footage for use in prosecution and insurance claims.

- All interior and exterior night lighting should continue to be used and maintained. Damaged lighting should be repaired when it is safe to access the premises.
- Consider suspending security guard services. Leaving security guards on site may make them a target because they represent a perceived arm of the law enforcement community. If you conclude that guards are required for monitoring and additional access control, consider using undercover/plain clothes guards in an observe and report capacity only (in such case, site perimeter cameras should be actively monitored in lieu of foot or vehicular patrols).

Additional considerations

Review and update business continuity plans to take into consideration the potential loss of critical operations at a site. Make sure the recovery strategies adequately address the requirement to transfer those critical processes to another site or the activation of remote operations to avoid significant business disruption.

- Considering that civil unrest can evolve rapidly, make sure you are constantly monitoring the situation. This includes signing up for community alerts and following key response agency and local jurisdiction social feeds.
- Ensure that all employees are familiar with plans and procedures in the event that your community is impacted by civil unrest.

Taking a multipronged approach to minimizing risks

If you would like to speak to a Marsh's Advisory property risk security specialist about developing, evaluating, or implementing a plan to help keep your facilities safe and secure, please contact us or reach out to your Marsh representative directly.

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