

PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND THE TEMPORARY SHUTTERING OF FACILITIES

The rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic has prompted governments and businesses to take extraordinary steps to help slow the spread of the virus and keep people safe. As a result, many organizations are being forced to close their facilities temporarily.

Contact your Marsh representative to advise of any Vacancy. Many insurance policies have vacancy provisions that must be complied with. Your specific policy wording should be reviewed and the interruption discussed with your insurer.

Below are some recommended steps, considerations, and tips to help keep your facilities safe and secure during their temporary closure. Note that this is an inclusive but not exhaustive list of recommendations.

General Property Conservation

- Prepare for a potential delay from all emergency response agencies (i.e., police, fire, and emergency medical services). Due to the current situation, emergency response agencies will have to prioritize their responses, which could mean fire alarm activations, property damage/vandalism, and non-violent crimes calls will not be considered a priority and response will be delayed.
- Ensure emergency response plans are up-to-date.
 - Review and update contact information/phone trees.
 - Make certain emergency contact information at each location is visibly posted for emergency response agencies.
 - Ensure fire department access boxes (Knox Boxes) have the most up-to-date facility information, keys, and access control credentials.
- Contact the local Enhanced 911 (E911) or emergency dispatch center to let them know that the building will be unoccupied until a specific date.
- Ensure security and fire alarm systems are functioning properly and connected to *two* independent communications mediums (i.e., 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 code, you cannot modify building exits even if the building is evacuated. For example, exterior doors cannot be chained.
- Test your emergency communications systems (i.e. SMS text, RSS feeds, auto-dialing, email, etc.). This includes asking employees to confirm receipt of test messages.
- Ensure your technology resilience and disaster recovery plans are up-to-date and stress-tested so that employees can continue to be productive remotely. If you have on-premise hosting, frequently monitor your cooling systems to ensure increased system demands from remote employees are not creating an ignition hazard. Portable air-conditioning units and commercial grade fans should be on hand to provide additional aisle and room cooling if needed.

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- Reinforce your cybersecurity protocols with employees and ask them to remain hyper-vigilant to ransomware and phishing scams. Cyber criminals will use the current pandemic to prey on organizations and their remote staff. The Department of Homeland Security has also developed a cybersecurity resource center that you can reference: <https://www.cisa.gov/coronavirus>.
- Ensure all drainage systems are fully functional, and drain outlets are clear of obstructions. This includes systems in elevator pits, basements, and other low-level areas.
- Work with your custodial service provider to disinfect and clean buildings according to recommendations from the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Current guidance can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>.
- Ensure all shipping and receiving operations are suspended or make alternative arrangements for delivery services.
- Ensure all rodent and pest control measures are current and in place.
- Ensure all facility fuel tanks are topped off, including, but not limited to diesel backup generators and diesel fire pumps.
- Ensure the building management system (BMS) system is fully functional from a remote location. This includes the ability to log in, monitor, and control the facility.
- Ensure facilities personnel have laptops that can go home with them to monitor the BMS.

Site Security

- Use barriers, surveillance, and lighting to deter, detect, and delay illegal access into a facility. Criminals will take advantage of the current situation to prey on properties with high-value assets and that appear vacant and insecure.
 - Site intrusion detection and video surveillance systems should be operational and able to transmit to your third-party monitoring agency.
 - The electronic access control system should be modified so that only essential facility personnel have access to the facility. All door and gate auto unlocking/opening programs should be disabled.
 - All other non-essential employee badges should be "locked out" until the facility is reopened.
 - Perimeter fences should be in good condition. This includes fence mesh, barbed wire topper, and no gaps at ground level.
 - All perimeter doors and windows should be closed and locked.
 - Pedestrian and vehicle access gates should be closed and locked.
 - Contact information for the Security Operations Center (SOC) or on-call staff should be posted on all gates in case first responders need emergency access.
 - All perimeter cameras should be fully functional and remotely viewable via laptop or cellular device. If fixed surveillance equipment is not installed, install an off-the-shelf, battery-powered, Wi-Fi capable system temporarily. Also, make sure any intrusion detection alerts available with your video surveillance system are turned on.
 - All interior and exterior night lighting should continue to be used and maintained. Light is a deterrent for criminals and helps police surveil your facility.

- Maintain reasonable security guard staffing levels during all shifts to ensure facility security. Consider staggering staff in the event staff becomes infected or needs to care for family members and reassigning non-essential fixed posts personnel (lobby security) to other essential security posts. If a security guard force is not in place, consider contracting a security company to patrol the facility temporarily.
- Provide security guards with the necessary protective equipment and train them on how to use it. Protective equipment may include N95/N100 facemasks, latex-free gloves, and appropriate cleaning/disinfection supplies.
- Provide security the most up-to-date contact information for facility management, information technology contacts, and management contacts.

Fire Prevention and Response

- Ensure fire suppression and alarm/detection systems are operational and able to transmit to your third party monitoring agency. Also, check that all fire pumps are in "auto" mode, and run timers are disabled.
- Suspend fire protection/detection system inspection, testing, and maintenance activities that impair the operation of systems. Only emergency repairs should be done, and the system impairment notification process should be followed.
- Maintain heat at a minimum of 40°F within all facilities that use water-based fixed fire suppression and domestic water systems.
- Perform no "hot" work in the facility unless it is vital to emergency repairs. If hot work has to take place, ensure appropriate hot work permitting procedures are in place and followed.
- Ensure fire extinguishers are functional and posted evacuation plans are up-to-date for essential personnel required to operate on-site.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance, please reach out to your Marsh Risk Consulting property risk consultant. You can also visit Marsh's COVID-19 resource hub for additional information: <https://www.marsh.com/us/insights/research/pandemic-risk-hub.html>.

Marsh is one of the Marsh & McLennan Companies, together with Guy Carpenter, Mercer, and Oliver Wyman.

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