

COVID-19: Construction Site Shutdown

During these unprecedented times, some construction sites may need to shut down in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this bulletin, we provide some risk protection advice to reduce the risk of loss at idle construction sites.

Each construction site has unique exposures. The following guidelines are provided as general advice that site managers can use to develop a site-specific plan to prevent or mitigate hazards during this pandemic.

Communications

- Inform your insurance company that you have an unoccupied construction site and advise them of the precautions you are taking to reduce and mitigate risk. Review your policy to ensure your site is properly covered.
- Notify local authorities and emergency response organizations, including police and fire departments, that your construction site is unoccupied. Provide them with your contact information in case of an emergency.
- Post emergency contact numbers in the event of an emergency on the gate and along the perimeter fences.
- Advise your alarm company of the vacancy, create new codes, and update contact information.
- Advise utility companies of the vacancy. Ask to be contacted in the event of high usage or emergency.
- Review and update contact names and numbers to report a claim.
- Regular construction activities should be cancelled such as lunch vans, bin pickups, cleaners, deliveries, etc.

Site security

- Conduct a thorough final site walkthrough to identify potential safety hazards. Think in terms of the unknowing public, identifying any dangers for vehicles and pedestrians that may come in contact with the work site.

- If not already provided, install perimeter fences minimum 1.8 m (6 ft.) high or follow local fencing bylaws. Repair if necessary.
- All mobile site trailers, sea cans, offices, and equipment should be locked.
- Exterior doors should be locked and, if possible, chained internally.
- Lock exterior or interior rooftop access points.
- All equipment/tools/etc. left behind should not be in plain sight.
- Ensure security lighting in place and working.
- Ensure security alarms/monitoring in place and working.
- CCTV cameras are recommended to be installed with remote monitoring, where practical.
- “No Unauthorized Access” or “No Trespassing” signage should be posted at entrance gates and along the perimeter fence.
- Provide onsite security, as needed/practical to protect against theft and trespassing.
- Confirm or update after-hours contacts including current emergency contact numbers.
- Maintain photo or video documentation of site condition as left. It is your record of precautionary actions taken before the shutdown.

Site supervision

- Conduct frequent regular site visits of the unoccupied property at different times of the day to note any changes. Consider hiring a guard service.

- The frequency of tours depends on the value, hazard, and protection for the site, ranging from a minimum once a week for low-valued property with monitored alarms to several times a week for high-valued or high-hazard construction sites without supervised alarms.
- During visits, survey general conditions and repair or replace where required, including:
 - All access points
 - The exterior of the site to note if there are any signs of vandalism or trespassing
 - Check fences for breaches or damage, gates, locks, warning signs, etc.
 - The interior tour of the buildings should include all areas
 - Site foundations
 - Broken or burnt out lights

Site equipment

- All non-essential machinery, equipment, and tools should be removed from site.
- Ladders should be removed and stored away to prevent unauthorized usage.
- Material hoist should be at ground level and isolated to prevent any unauthorized usage.
- Scaffolding should be made safe by removing access ladders and “No Unauthorized Access” sign posted.
- All excavations/penetrations should be adequately secured, covered or barricaded, with warning signs posted.
- Edge protection in place on leading edges and drop-off points to excavations and trenches, otherwise areas securely barricaded with signage posted.
- All exposed reinforcing steel rebar should be “red-capped” or otherwise protected.
- Tower cranes
 - Ladder access should be locked out.
 - Aviation lights on tower crane should be operational.
 - Tower crane hook should be free from chains and slings.
 - Tower crane should be in free slew mode.
- Turn off applicable master switches and controls, lock and tag out where required. Do not turn off electricity required for fire protection, life safety, storm water management or general lighting needed to safely conduct tours and inspections.
- All sources of water for non-essential applications should be turned off unless lack of water would cause damage to equipment or building systems. Water to essential services such as fire protection and life safety systems should be maintained in full service.

Materials

- Maintain housekeeping in good order.
- Hazardous materials should be removed from site or stored in a secure area in accordance with local code requirements (i.e. flammable liquid in locked ventilated flammable cabinets, compressed gas cylinders in locked cages in open air areas, etc.).

- Diesel or fuel tanks should be removed or emptied, if feasible. Otherwise, the discharge and fill lines should be locked.
- All materials should be stored as far away from site perimeter fence as practical (minimum 1.8 m (6 ft.)).
- All exposed electrical cables should be tagged and made safe.
- Roof construction material should be secured, and debris should be removed from the roof.
- Debris and waste should be removed. Accessible bins should be removed or locked to prevent unauthorized dumping.

Offices

- All mobile site trailers, sea cans, and offices should be made safe, with doors locked, with security padlocks where required, keys removed, etc.
- All office equipment, computers, copiers, scanners, etc. should be removed from site or securely locked away.
- Vermin protection is important. Ensure adequate measures taken.

Construction vehicles

- All construction vehicles left onsite should be in safe areas with drip trays under engines and wheels chocked.
- Securely lock all construction vehicles with keys kept in a lockable safe or secure place. Otherwise remove construction vehicles to off-site locations or other jobs.
- All batteries to construction vehicles kept onsite should be disconnected.

Emergency planning and response

- Plan for emergencies. Unforeseen events can happen, so it’s important to have a protocol in place that clearly outlines contact points and specific steps that must be taken for quick action in the event of an emergency during site inactivity.
- Designate someone to monitor weather conditions to provide a timely response to a severe weather event.
- Inspect critical sumps, gutters, and storm water drainage to ensure it is in good operating condition and not blocked. Consider purchasing backup sump pumps.
- If water management and detection devices are installed provide remote monitoring where feasible.

All construction sites have different hazards and exposures. In each case, risk control measures should be implemented to address those specific risks. For further assistance, please contact your Aon account engineer or account executive.

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