

MANAGING THE RISKS OF CORONAVIRUS

CONSTRUCTION SITE SHUTDOWN

COVID-19 has quickly and drastically changed our lives and the way we do business, and it is causing anxiety for employers and employees alike. While most of the news coverage has focused on health precautions one should take, the government and select contractors are now starting to restrict construction jobsite activity.

While the health of the workforce is certainly important, here are RCM&D's recommendations on what a contractor should do to secure a worksite if a government-mandated work stoppage becomes a reality.

FIRST THING'S FIRST – CONTACT RCM&D

When preparing for a mandatory or self-imposed shutdown, there are several considerations to protect your interest as a property owner or a contractor. First, talk with your RCM&D service team professional about the implications of your pending decision or mandatory shutdown. You may have contractual requirements to satisfy and need to be well informed of the impact of your decisions on your insurance program.



THE WORKFORCE

First and foremost is to take precautions to protect the workforce while the site is still operating. As has been recommended by health experts, the workers should stay home if sick and self-quarantine if exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. The same should apply to a worker exhibiting symptoms of the virus. OSHA has produced a 35 page document on the subject of COVID-19 in the workplace.

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

Employers should give high priority to the cleaning and hygiene on site in common areas and items such as door handles, handrails, portable bathrooms, etc. Provide adequate handwashing facilities and take other precautions listed in the document referenced above.

- » Food vendors and trucks should be asked to not visit sites or use precooked food if they do.
- » Limit group gatherings to fewer than 10 people and practice social distancing, where possible.
- » Limit jobsite visitors to “critical need only”.

THE JOBSITE

In terms of the site itself, start from the outside in as you prepare for a shutdown.

- » Evaluate traffic lane closures for which you are responsible.
- » Ensure that street closure permit requirements are met and will continue to be met while the project is shut down.
- » If the site is fenced, check that all sections are in good repair and serve the intended purpose.
- » If not already in place, consider fencing the entire perimeter including road address points.
- » Satisfy your duty to warn by installing signage indicating “danger”, “no trespassing”, “keep out” or similar message that conveys potential danger.
- » Signage should be placed at intervals such that a person can see at least one sign as they approach the fence at any given point.
- » Evaluate your lighting needs to keep the worksite well-lit to aid law enforcement and emergency response personnel.
- » Identify and protect confined spaces and trenches.

ONSITE SECURITY

- » Verify that any existing security systems are communicating properly.
- » Consider adding electronic surveillance in the form of motion detectors and/or security cameras with adequate pixel resolution and storage capabilities.
- » Consider having a security vulnerable security assessment done. This may result in a recommendation to add site security personnel where the risk for trespassing is deemed high.
- » Where possible monitor worksites via drive-bys for obvious signs of damage or trespassing. Do not confront would be trespassers. Call law enforcement and your RCM&D claims advocate. Additionally, working alone should be avoided unless there is a suitable lone worker procedure in place.

FIRE & WATER

Fire damage and water intrusion are the two most common and costly types property losses on construction sites. They also contribute to project delays.

- » Where possible turn off domestic water supply at the source. Be aware that some equipment may need a continuous water supply to operate properly.
- » Water to in-service fire sprinkler systems should not be shut off without first checking with the authority having jurisdiction and your RCM&D insurance professional. You may need to provide for continuous heat to protect water from freezing.

EQUIPMENT & MATERIALS

- » Where possible move motorized equipment to an offsite, secure location.
- » Remove and safely store keys to licensed and motorized equipment.
- » Ensure that GPS and theft prevention devices are in working order.
- » Install secure barriers around the base of tower cranes.
- » Remove portable tools and equipment from the site. Where not feasible, store such in a secure, non-visible location
- » Document the amount and condition of the materials stored on site as you shut down. In the event of a loss, this can be a valuable tool in terms of establishing proof of loss. If using video to document, make sure it is archived and retrievable.
- » Move high value equipment and materials to a secure location. If not feasible, protect buildings materials and equipment that can be damaged by weather events or water intrusion.
- » Ensure smoke, fire, water intrusion and motion detection devices are working properly.
- » Ensure that storm water management controls are in place according to plan.
- » Shut off all utilities to the extent possible while allowing for those deemed necessary.

Questions? Talk to a trusted advisor.
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