



## IS CIVIL UNREST PART OF YOUR PRE-EMERGENCY PLAN?



Civil Unrest Events have unique challenges for property and business owners. Having a plan in place can mitigate the impact of such an event.

A cornerstone of American democracy is the right of citizens to assemble and peacefully protest issues of social, political and economic importance. As 2020 has taught us, peaceful protests can be overshadowed by civil unrest events that result in unique challenges for property and business owners. Are you prepared?

### **What is Civil Unrest?**

Civil unrest can be defined as an act of protest in a public space that escalates into a disturbance or interruption to peace and order. Civil unrest events can involve large amounts of people, and in some cases, include violence leading to bodily injury or property damage.

It is important to recognize that not all gatherings of people lead to civil unrest events. However, what starts as a peaceful gathering can escalate quickly depending on a variety of factors. While you may not be able to prevent a civil unrest event from occurring, you can mitigate the impact of the event on your business by being prepared and making a plan.

### **Does Your Pre-Emergency Program Include a Plan for Civil Unrest Events?**

When companies develop their Pre-Emergency program for their business they will typically have many different topics that they address. Weather events, fire, utility outages, to name a few. But not everyone has a civil unrest event as part of their Pre-Emergency Plan.

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Having a civil unrest event as a component of your Pre-Emergency Plan can make a big difference on how your business and your employees are impacted by an event. Here are some things to consider:

**Make a Plan.** Have a written plan for civil unrest events which interface with your overall Emergency Response Plan. Remember, the plan should be specific to civil unrest events and be a part of your Overall Emergency Response Plan as well as your Business Continuity Plan.

**Test and Maintain the Plan.** On a periodic basis you should test your plan. It is not time to find out your plan is not working during the event. An Emergency Coordinator or like person should be in charge of the plan and make sure it is kept up to date and tested on a periodic basis.

**Communicate Your Plan.** Your plan needs to be shared with your employees. They need to understand that they are an integral part of the plan. Their responsibilities should be clearly outlined and reviewed with the employees. There should be clear guidance as to what actions need to be taken and what the priorities in the event the plan is needed to be put into action. You should communicate your plan with all outside government agencies and vendors you are partnering with as well.

In making a plan for civil unrest events, the components of your plan can vary depending on the unique attributes of your business and location. When putting together your plan a good way to think about it is from a pre and post event perspective. Some of the things you should think about that are specific to a plan for addressing civil unrest events include:

## PRE-EVENT

**Monitoring:** Work with your local authorities in keeping up to date with all events in your area that could impact you. Monitor social media. Learn in advance where gatherings of people may occur as well as planned protest routes. Who are the groups that are sponsoring the event or actively involved

the event? Is there a past history and if so is it one of peaceful protest? Early activation of your plan is important as it allows you more time to make decisions and take action. Also, be aware of any spontaneous events that occur in your immediate area that could cause an unforeseen gathering of people and notify authorities immediately.

Here are some items you should consider when putting together your plan:

- ✓ **Meet with Local Authorities.** Get their input when putting together your plan. Review your plan with them when completed and invite them to your site if possible.
- ✓ **Employee Awareness:** In your plan have a method to determine when and how to evaluate your employees' safety as well as a way to communicate with them pre and post event.
- ✓ **Contact List:** Upon activation of your plan have an up to date contact list of people to notify. This will include internal people as well as the local authorities and vendors.
- ✓ **Protective Safeguards:** Have your fire alarm and burglary alarm in working order and if possible secured. Advise the alarm companies and local authorities if you leave the building, and the alarm should be active.
- ✓ **Building Access:** Assure that all windows; roof openings; doors and other areas of possible entry into the building are secure. Where possible use steel roll down doors and have shutters on windows.
- ✓ **Lighting:** Provide illumination throughout the exterior of the property. If possible secure the area.
- ✓ **Building Emergency Equipment:** All emergency equipment including generators; elevators; emergency lighting and all life safety equipment should be maintained and functional. If you have elevators and are evacuating the building they should be locked out on the upper floor unless advised differently from the local authorities.

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- ✓ **Sensitive Data/Confidential Data:** Secure vital information. Remove it from the site if possible. If not have it in a secure place. Have procedures to power down equipment as needed. Some sensitive electronic equipment and manufacturing processes if not shut down properly can result in a significant loss.
- ✓ **Inventory/Stock:** If time allows, secure your inventory. Pay special attention to High Target inventory. High Target Inventory is defined as items that are high in value; easily transportable; and easy to resell. Each one of these 3 items that are present add an additional layer of exposure for increased chance of theft.
- ✓ **Exterior Protective Considerations:** Where possible remove combustible storage from outside the building. Remove or secure anything that could be used as a projectile. When possible also remove flammable and combustible liquids and aerosols as well as other accelerants from inside the building.

## POST-EVENT

- ✓ **Event Status:** Keep up to date on current news and events. Verify information with the local authorities to determine when it is safe to return to the site.
- ✓ **Communicate:** Stay in touch with your employees. Make it clear when people will be allowed to return to the site. The person responsible for the Pre-Emergency plan should designate when it is safe for employees to return. Ideally the site should be evaluated for safety by the Emergency Management Team prior to anyone returning.

- ✓ **Secure and Repair:** Make all needed repairs to secure the site and restore services immediately to prevent further damage. Have temporary supplies on hand to make emergency repairs if needed, e.g., waterproof tarps and plywood. Specific items needed should be determined in advance.
- ✓ **Overall Emergency Response Plan:** Make sure that you have your overall Emergency Response Plan readily available so that people can refer to it. They will need it. In addition, your Business Continuity Plan should be available as well. Report any damage to the local authorities as well as broker/agent and insurance carrier immediately so that they can assist you in the mitigation of any damages.

### Additional Resources to Consider

1. A list of agencies to consider enlisting support for pre and post event planning.
2. Local Emergency Management Agencies
3. Local Police and Fire Department
4. Local and State Health Department
5. [OSHA](#)
6. [FEMA](#)
7. Any organizations that support your industry

Civil unrest events should be part of everyone's Emergency Response Plan. Your plan should be developed with your local health, safety, law and fire agencies. The final plan should be shared with all agencies involved, and a visit to your site should be encouraged, if possible. The plan should be a component of your overall Emergency Response Plan. While no plan can prevent a loss from occurring, a well-developed and implemented plan will help you to better protect your employees, reduce your likelihood for loss and better mitigate damages if they were to occur.

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