

BACKGROUND: BOMA is the leading trade association for commercial real estate professionals and represents the interests of owners, managers, service providers and property professionals. Its mission is to advance a vibrant commercial real estate industry through advocacy, influence, and knowledge.

This preparedness guide was first introduced in anticipation of turmoil surrounding the 2020 election. Given current economic uncertainty and political tensions, preparedness should remain a top concern. This guide has some commonsense precautions and a checklist that building managers can take to protect the building and its tenant base.

PLAN IN ADVANCE

Develop a Plan: Work with property management and security personnel to develop policies and procedures to prepare and respond to an incident. Determine when and how to implement additional protections and security, and when and how to initiate lockdown procedures. Specify a clear chain of command, including who within building management or ownership will make key decisions if necessary.

Review Your Property: Perform an inventory of possible problems, including property and building access points, glass windows and any potential projectiles. Review all fencing and lighting. Also confirm the exact locations of the property line and any easements, as trespassing may end up being an important consideration.

Work with Public Safety Authorities: Coordinate in advance with your local police department and other law enforcement groups. Increased interaction will lead to better communication, better planning and, ideally, better results. Involve law enforcement officials in your planning and drills. Offer your assistance; for instance, space can be offered to law enforcement to assist with their operations in the event of an incident. As is always a best practice, get to know public safety leaders now--an emergency is not the time to be making introductions.

Prepare for a Possible Lockdown: Have emergency kits and supplies available should a situation occur where it's not safe for employees to leave the property. Identify a safe refuge area away from windows that has a landline phone and cell phone coverage.

Be Ready to Communicate: Develop a communications plan and confirm your list of employees, tenants and vendors so you can communicate to the right individuals. Test your system for communicating, which must be operable at any time of day. And discuss how any press inquiries will be handled.

Practice the Plan: No matter how good your plans are, they won't work if they're not practiced. Hold tabletop exercises and physical rehearsals if possible, including building evacuations, with all employees, tenants and vendors; these can be held virtually for those who have not returned to work in the building.

Review Insurance Policy: Some policies contain potentially relevant exclusions - including those relating to strikes, riots, and civil commotion. Policyholders and their advisors should review their policies to assess the extent to which this type of exclusion might apply.

PREPARING FOR AN INCIDENT

- Activate precautionary steps by increasing security measures and personnel; visible security can also act as a deterrent.
- Ensure that all recording devices, closed-circuit televisions and cameras are operational.
- Remove, repair or replace any loose items on or around the building that could be used as projectiles.
- Secure construction sites, trash dumpsters and outdoor property (e.g., tables, chairs, planters).
- Consider covering all ground-floor glass windows and doors.
- Secure the perimeter by implementing any access control procedures, such as closing selected entrances, manually checking IDs and posting additional signage.
- Alter the building's routine as appropriate, including shifting opening and closing times, encouraging telecommuting and coordinating with tenants on possible curfews.
- Consider parking alternatives; for instance, employees could park off-site, shuttle to the building and have security personnel escort them inside.
- Circulate security's phone number so tenants and employees can call for any assistance.

DURING AN INCIDENT

- Establish communication and share all safety-related details and updates with building tenants, customers and vendors.
- Be vigilant about protesters trying to gain access to your roof using false contractor IDs. Fake telecommunication badges have been used in the past to gain roof access to unveil banners from buildings.
- Actively monitor the news and social media for up-to-date information.
- Stay in contact with your chamber of commerce, downtown improvement district or other business associations.
- Announce which entrances and exits should be used during the event.
- Consider how to handle protesters entering the building; lockdown elevators if necessary.
- Be vigilant and plan to be an active observer: any unusual gathering should be monitored, noted and communicated, but do not attempt to make contact with demonstrators.
- Don't overreact: peaceful protests and marches are lawful First Amendment activities whether scheduled or spontaneous, and the vast majority of protests are peaceful.
- Determine when and how to lockdown or close a property. If necessary, make a shelter-in-place announcement, with the understanding that you may not have authority to prohibit tenants from leaving.
- Determine when to contact the police in the event of a crime or dangerous situation, if any individual is assaulted, property is damaged or trespassing becomes a threat.

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