



Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) & Civil Unrest Special Advisory Bulletin

Risk Services Division

1 June 2020

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Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) & Civil Unrest

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- Mass demonstration events have occurred in at least 75 cities across the United States over the past several days. While many demonstrations across the country have remained peaceful, violence has erupted in many locations as well.
- Many cities across the US have imposed curfews in an attempt to curb violence, looting, and vandalism.
- Mass gatherings significantly increase the risk of the spread of COVID-19. Associated activities such as interpersonal proximity and contact, chanting, singing, shouting, as well as the potential for close crowd containment by law enforcement.
- Exposure to emergency crowd control measures such as tear gas and pepper spray will induce coughing and sneezing which is a primary contamination vector for COVID-19.
- At this time, there is no vaccine for COVID-19 or any natural health products that are authorized to protect against it. All agencies strongly advocate for non-pharmaceutical interventions stressing *social distancing* and *enhanced hygiene*.
- In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that *all persons in the United States are at some risk of COVID-19* given the increases in community spread throughout the United States.

Summary

Demonstrations and protest rallies are continuing in many cities across the US following the death of George Floyd in police custody on May 25th in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Curfews have been imposed in as many as 40 cities and the National Guard has been activated in 23 states and in Washington DC.

Large numbers of demonstrators may be drawn to participate in events. Police are expected to continue to be deployed to monitor the demonstrations. Clashes between law enforcement and demonstrators cannot be ruled out. Localized traffic and business disruptions are likely in the vicinity of large gatherings.

Advisory

Most public gatherings, including protests, are peaceful. However, episodes of civil unrest can erupt from congregations that begin as calm events, but escalate out of the control of organizers. This shift from gathering to rioting can result in personal injuries, fatalities, property damage, loss of business activity, disruption of organizational supply chains and a reduction in access to banking institutions. Organizations that could be affected by civil unrest should review safety and security procedures, crisis management and business continuity plans, and relevant insurance coverages.

General considerations

- Stay informed: Pay close attention to local television, radio broadcasts and alerts issued by local governments, police or civil protection agencies.
- Prepare for a possible shutdown of civil services, schools, etc.
- Understand that the cellular networks may become overwhelmed.
- Have a first aid kit available.
- During periods of long-term civil unrest, be sure that you have adequate amounts of cash in case the banks close.

If you are in a crowd

- Stay alert and aware of your environment, as crowd behavior can change very quickly.
- Move away from the more agitated parts of the crowd, and get inside a safe location as quickly as possible.
- Avoid discussing anything with the crowd even if there are taunts or insults.
- Avoid temporary structures which could collapse.
- Avoid standing near or against immovable objects, such as walls or doors, that would limit your mobility.
- Avoid standing still or sitting down near the crowd.
- If you have dropped an item, unless it is critical, don't try to pick it up. Bending or getting your fingers stepped on or trapped will increase your risk of being pushed to the ground.
- If you fall or are pushed down, try to get back to your feet as quickly as possible; If someone is willing and able, extend an arm and ask for help getting back to your feet quickly.
- If you can't get up, keep moving. Crawl in the direction of the crowd until you can get back on your feet.
- If you cannot get up at all, curl your body into a ball to create an air pocket, and cover your head. Keep your back facing up, protecting your head and face with your hands and arms. Wait for a lull in the pressure or flow to try to get back to your feet.

Business considerations during civil unrest

Protesters may target businesses in order to steal property, gain publicity and for purposes of revenge. It is important to understand that police, fire, and other emergency services will likely be overwhelmed, emergency calls will be prioritized, and areas may be deemed off limits or without law enforcement support. Curfews, cessation of public transportation, closing of main transportation corridors, and loss of telecommunications or power, may result in significant business disruption.

- Ensure a crisis management plan is in place, updated, and that the leadership is aware of their roles.
- Conduct a physical security audit to determine any weak points.
- Make contact with local authorities and companies in your area to discuss plans.
- Monitor news sources and social media to maintain awareness of evolving issues.
- Review the need to modify working hours or close early to allow staff to get home safely.
- Identify how to communicate updates to the workforce on government advisories, changes to business operations and payroll processing.
- Determine critical functions that need to be sustained and identify potential workarounds.
- Identify off-site work locations or work from home options if the main offices are inaccessible.
- Identify any potential supply chain disruptions and review management options.
- Review fire, safety and security procedures, if the unrest is close to the physical structures.
- Make sure doors are locked and board up windows, if needed.
- Remove cash and small valuables and relocate to a safer place, if possible.
- Take caution when leaving employees behind to protect property or monitor sensitive equipment. It is important to review safety concerns and any applicable employment issues.
- Consider adding signage and barriers around the facility to clearly identify “no access” or “no trespassing” areas.
- Remove trash and any other unwanted combustible materials that may be used to start fires.
- Remove portable objects that could be used as projectiles.
- Ensure that external lighting is operating as designed.
- Remove and avoid parking vehicles overnight in high-risk areas or close to the building.
- Prepare for an increase in possible cyber hacking activity, as there can be a correlation between computer hacking and civil unrest.

No matter the crisis, HUB is to help.

View resources for Coronavirus (COVID-19), violence & active shooter, hurricane and more at hubinternational.com/crisisresources, so you can protect what matters most. For additional support, please reach out to your local HUB office.