Civil Unrest

Demonstrations, protests, and rioting. Conflicts between individuals escalating into violence.

 Amid the anxiety and angst of the worst pandemic in 100 years, the elimination of social injustice has been the rallying cry of protesters following the George Floyd incident. Peaceful demonstrations erupting into violence under the cover of darkness have been national news. Cities of all sizes have seen demonstrations—some experiencing civil unrest night-after-night for months.

Acts of vandalism, malicious destruction of property, and arson have been perpetrated on government buildings, statues, vehicles, and other property. Public streets, highways, and public space have been blocked and barricaded to prevent the free movement of citizens and commerce. Assault, battery, and homicide have been perpetrated with bricks, stones, firearms, and other weapons. Police, protesters, counter-protesters, and innocent people have been injured. Businesses have been looted and destroyed by fire. Block after block of storefronts have been boarded up. Losses to businesses in at least 40 cities in 20 US states may come close to the costliest civil disorder in US history. [Claims Journal, June 2, 2020]

Recent decades have witnessed protests and civil disorder surrounding issues of social injustice, world economic and trade forums, political conventions, major sporting events, and labor disputes. Riots have plagued the United States for more than half a century, and 50 countries have seen a surge in civil unrest since 2019 according to political risk consultants Verisk Maplecroft.

Concern about protests and demonstrations like those surrounding the 2016 Presidential election have law enforcement planning for the possibility of a repeat. Directors of security worry that volatile political divisions in our society may provoke conflicts between workers escalating into

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Civil Unrest is now a foreseeable threat requiring preparedness.

**Potential for Civil Unrest**

Crowds that gather are not always a single, cohesive unit with leadership that can control the group’s behavior. Individuals and groups with opposing views may assemble to counter and antagonize. Those with ulterior motives may infiltrate the group or take advantage of the situation to further their interests.

A peaceful protest can escalate into unrest when a small group initiates a disturbance. Others, not associated with the original demonstrators and alerted by social media and news reports, join—often to loot and cause damage. These individuals are not concerned or associated with the original demonstrators. When organized groups who have planned disruptive activities directed against targets of opportunity join the unrest, the disturbance escalates into a riot.

Demonstrations, protests, and civil unrest have the potential to escalate extremely fast. Protesters may engage with law enforcement to provoke the use of force. Counter-protesters may also be targeted. First responders and citizens in the area can quickly become victims as the mob surrounds them. Often during civil unrest, firefighters are targeted with projectiles while attempting to extinguish fires. When firefighters withdraw, fires spread uncontrolled.

**Weapons & Tactics**

Numerous weapons and tactics have been employed by perpetrators of violence during civil unrest. Stones and bricks, tire irons, baseball bats, and other blunt instruments have been used as weapons to attack law enforcement, to vandalize buildings, and enter stores for looting.

Fireworks and incendiary devices, such as Molotov cocktails, have all been observed during recent civil unrest. Fires involving buildings, police and civilian motor vehicles, and available combustibles can be expected. Paints mixed with flammable liquids have been thrown or sprayed at law enforcement and should be considered a precursor to an incendiary attack.

The use of a motor vehicle as a weapon such as the incident in New York City (Hudson River Park bike path, 2017) is a known terrorist method. Civilians and police officers have been struck by motor vehicles in violent demonstrations. Drivers of motor vehicles attempting to travel on roadways blocked by protesters have been attacked.

Chemical spray and acid splash attacks have become a worldwide problem because chemicals are readily available, can be purchased in large quantities without a permit, are easily deployed, and cause immediate injury with minimal product. Motivations include civil unrest as well as crime, revenge, terrorism, and even pranks. Their use cannot be ruled out during civil unrest.

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**Escalated Tumultuous Crowd Dynamics**

*Public disorder:* a basic breach of civic order. Individuals or small groups assemble and disrupt normal order.

*Public disturbance:* turmoil on top of the initial disruption. Individuals and groups assemble often and begin chanting, yelling, singing, and voicing individual or collective opinions.

*Riot:* one or more groups or individuals within a crowd threaten or act violently toward other people or property and create an extremely volatile environment.

Army Techniques Publication Civil Disturbances (ATP 3-39.33, April 2014) [https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-CivilDisturbances-2014.pdf](https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-CivilDisturbances-2014.pdf)
Vulnerability & Risk Assessment

A risk assessment that identifies the potential for civil unrest, develops planning scenarios, and identifies vulnerabilities of employees and other building occupants, the building and other property, and business operations should be conducted.

Threat assessment should identify the potential locations of public gatherings and travel paths of protesters. Threat assessment should also identify the potential for conflicts between employees, customers and employees, and customers that could escalate into violence. The timing of scenarios should consider when civil unrest is possible and times when large numbers of persons arrive, occupy the property, and depart.

**Risk Assessment Process**

<table>
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<th>Threat Assessment: What is the potential for civil unrest; and what is the probability that your property, employees, customers, and or visitors will be targeted or affected?</th>
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<td>Vulnerability Assessment: What are the physical weaknesses in site perimeter, building exterior, access control, physical and operational security, detection, alerting, communications, life safety and other utility systems that would make employees, property, and operations more susceptible to civil unrest? What gaps exist in policies, procedures, and programs that would impact the ability to deter, detect or effectively respond to civil unrest?</td>
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<td>Impact Analysis: What are the potential consequences of civil unrest—on employees, visitors, customers, and business operations?</td>
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The risk assessment should evaluate the ability to detect threats and acts of violence, alert first responders, warn people, and take actions to safeguard people and protect property. The adequacy of, and vulnerabilities or weaknesses in, surveillance and intelligence gathering, deterrence, physical and operational security, alerting, warning and communications systems, means of egress, and emergency procedures should be evaluated. The risk assessment should evaluate the following:

- Site location and proximity to government buildings, sporting venues, businesses, and other properties that may be targeted.
- The locations of public parks, squares, parking lots, and other locations where protesters may congregate.
- Known parade or protest march routes.
- Methods to gather real-time intelligence about the location of blocked streets, fires, other hazards, and the movement of large groups and violent perpetrators.
- Site perimeter and layout (fencing, sight lines, illumination, field of view and acuity of surveillance cameras, security of points of access, obstructions of secondary means of egress or escape, and exposed property susceptible to theft or vandalism).
- Building exterior (exterior glass, displays of high valued merchandise, doors with extensive glass or light hardware, windows that can be accessed from ground level).
- Building layout including egress routes and areas of refuge.
- Surveillance, alerting, warning, communications, and protection systems.
- Physical and operational security including the availability of trained security guards to supervise entryways, control access, continuously monitor surveillance systems to detect threats, and maintain lines of communications to intelligence sources.
- Fire protection and life safety systems including fire detection, alarm, communications, and suppression systems.
- Means of egress for prompt evacuation of the building through secondary exits away from protesters and hazards, and lockdown and shelter-in-place strategies to protect those who cannot safely exit.
- Building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system arrangement and manipulation to prevent the entry and recirculation of smoke and riot control agents.
- Mass notification system or means to warn those in danger or potentially in danger to stay away from the building or take protective action (evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place); and to alert team members to assemble virtually or at an alternate location.
- Employee risk factors including travel to, and work at, off-site locations potentially impacted by civil unrest.
- Policies and procedures including workplace violence prevention, safety, and security programs.
- Plans for civil unrest and acts of violence including coordination with law enforcement on
the collection and dissemination of information and intelligence and response procedures.

- Emergency operations plan, training, drills, and exercises.

Ventilation systems take in fresh outside air and mix it with recirculated air within the building. During civil unrest, smoke from nearby fires and riot control agents can be drawn into the building by the ventilation system. Once contaminants enter the building, they can be spread throughout. The vulnerability assessment should evaluate the arrangement of the ventilation system including the locations of controls, fresh air intakes, mechanical rooms, and the manipulation of the system to prevent the entrance and circulation of contaminants.

If full control is available from the building management system (BMS), are personnel available (on-site or off-site if BMS is remotely controlled), authorized to access, and trained to operate it? This includes closing air intakes and shutting down or switching fans to exhaust mode. If a central BMS is not available, are instructions and controls for shutting down air intakes and individual zones accessible to authorized persons and properly marked?

[See Preparedness Bulletin “Risk Assessment” for additional guidance.]

Impact Analysis

Occupying protesters have barricaded city blocks, and protesters have blocked highways and streets. Fires, vandalism, and looting have shutdown retail districts. The analysis should evaluate the potential for disruption of business operations when employees, customers, or suppliers cannot access the site. The potential impacts resulting from physical damage to the building or the interruption of electrical power, telecommunications, and other utilities should also be assessed.

Evaluate the ability to execute continuity strategies to continue time-sensitive business processes at minimum acceptable levels. The availability and capability of resources including qualified employees, facilities (and supporting infrastructure), machinery and equipment, information technology (networks, computers, peripherals, applications, and digital information), and supply chain (goods and services) should be assessed.

[See Preparedness Bulletin “Business Impact Analysis” for additional guidance.]

Security, Life Safety & Emergency Planning

Operational Security

Operational security is the human element of security. It includes processes to gather information and intelligence; evaluate evolving threats including local and regional events; and implement security measures commensurate with the threat level. Operational security is dependent on having access to threat intelligence and trained staff capable of implementing security measures. Everyone has responsibility for security—to follow established security rules and be aware of persons or behavior that may constitute a threat. Operational security should include the following commensurate with the facility’s threat level.

- Establish credentialing procedures that restrict access for employees and approved contractors to authorized areas.
- Screen visitors, require an escort, and provide a visitor’s badge.
- Maintain control of building and utility diagrams; share with public safety.
- Install video surveillance in accordance with national standards to cover the exterior and interior of all access points and select interior spaces; provide the ability to capture and export images and provide remote access to video surveillance during an emergency.
■ Establish interoperable communications and procedures for unification of command with public safety.
■ Implement the DHS “If You See Something, Say Something™” campaign. Develop criteria and reporting procedures for suspicious and irrational behaviors; unknown persons photographing, video recording, sketching, or pace counting on or in proximity to the premises; repeat visitors or outsiders who have no apparent business in non-public area; unattended vehicles; abandoned parcels, suitcases, backpacks, and packages.
■ Develop a site security plan that includes visitor and package screening, threat detection, alerting of first responders, warning of persons to take protective actions, and communications protocols and procedures.
■ Document the locations of exits; post easily understood diagrams with primary and alternate paths to exits within each room; identify and include the locations of safe rooms on diagrams.
■ Develop and implement emergency procedures for threats and acts of violence identified during the risk assessment and protective actions for life safety (evacuation/run, lock-down/hide/shelter-in-place, and fight/counter).
■ Provide training to enhance awareness of security measures; identify persons loitering, surveilling, or attempting to enter unauthorized areas; protocols and procedures for reporting incidents; and emergency procedures including protective actions for life safety.
■ Conduct drills for protective actions including evacuation, shelter-in-place, and “run, hide, and fight”.
■ Host pre-incident planning visits to familiarize public safety with the site, buildings, and emergency protocols.
■ Conduct periodic exercises to familiarize personnel with emergency plans and to evaluate plans, procedures, capabilities, and resources.

Evaluate the following physical barriers and electronic security systems taking into consideration the scenarios developed during the vulnerability and risk assessment.
■ Are all exterior doors and windows in good condition and locked?
■ Are all other entrances locked and equipped with electronic card access or another system?
■ Are windows breakage-resistant? Equipped with break glass detection?
■ Is visitor access limited to one entrance that is properly staffed to screen the visitors and examine any packages?
■ Is access to passenger and service elevators restricted to authorized employees and escorted visitors? Are elevators programmed to restrict access to authorized floors only?
■ Are other potential points of entry such as roof hatches and skylights equipped with intrusion detection?
■ Are all electronic devices monitored at a constantly attended location?
■ Are security personnel who monitor the electronic systems trained and qualified?

Life Safety
Adequate means of egress and functioning life safety systems are critically important when a threat or hazard requires evacuation. Evacuation of a large or multi-story building can take considerable time. Ensure that plans are in place to ensure the safety of all occupants including persons with disabilities and those needing extra assistance.
■ Are there sufficient exits with adequate capacity to handle the maximum occupant load? Two exits should be the minimum for each floor, additional may be required depending upon the size and layout of the building.
■ Are exit doors easily openable, and are stairwells and exit discharges unobstructed so occupants can quickly evacuate the building?
■ Are emergency lighting and exits signs adequate to ensure that evacuees can locate an exit?
■ Are exit components (exit access, exit stairwells, and exit discharge) properly illuminated and equipped with functioning backup power?

Physical Security
Physical security measures deter would-be perpetrators and help to prevent access to unauthorized persons. Surveillance and detection systems provide operational security with the ability to detect suspicious activity and actual threats.
Is there an effective evacuation plan that is practiced regularly? Do occupants know the location of primary and secondary exits as well as where to assemble after exiting the building? Are there at least two assembly areas in opposite directions in case one area is not safe to approach?

Are there provisions to identify and evacuate persons needing special assistance?

Are refuge areas available for those who cannot evacuate because of airborne hazards in the egress path; fire, or smoke; or they are incapable of negotiating stairs?

[See Preparedness Bulletin “Protective Actions for Life Safety,” for additional guidance.]

Emergency Planning

Emergency plans should be established following national standards such as NFPA 1600 and applicable regulations. Plans should include protective actions for life safety including evacuation and shelter-in-place. Emergency response should be guided by an incident management system with defined roles and responsibilities and lines of authorities. Ensure that required resources have been identified and are available.

[See Preparedness Bulletin “Incident Management System” for more guidance.]

Preparedness for Planned Demonstrations

Advance notice of scheduled events and awareness of spontaneous gatherings, demonstrations, and protests that could lead to civil unrest is essential to allow time to implement reasonable preparedness measures. The information gathered and intelligence developed will enable decisions regarding facility operations, staffing, preparedness activities, and actions that should be taken if the situation escalates to threaten people or facilities.

Monitor the news media, social media, and establish lines of communication with public safety agencies especially law enforcement. News outlets, law enforcement, and other public safety agencies push out information via Twitter, Facebook, and their official websites. Find out which social media apps are available locally. For example, the Citizen app is available in major cities and provides raw, real-time information about what is happening in the community.

Anticipate travel needs and challenges during civil disturbances. The safety of public transportation and stations in proximity to the building should be monitored and instructions to avoid unsafe areas communicated to those potentially affected.

Plan for the arrival and departure of employees and visitors based on the risk assessment and instructions from authorities. Communicate the scope and timing of any curfew orders and any changes to public transportation schedules. Evaluate the availability of employees and their ability to report for work, especially during evening and night shifts when protests often escalate into violence. Plan for the possibility that essential employees may not be able to get to work or leave to return home on schedule.

Enhance security staffing levels commensurate with the risk assessment. All two-radio and mobile telephone communications equipment should be fully charged, and sufficient spare batteries should be available. Verify all fire protection, emergency power supplies and their fuel supply, communications, and warning systems are in reliable condition.

Verify that all security measures are in place commensurate with the threat level and instructions from public authorities. Remove anything outside that could be vandalized or used as a projectile. Motor vehicles should be relocated to a safe location. Fences, gates, and exterior doors should be locked and secure. Exterior lighting should be fully functional to illuminate all sides of the buildings. Where installed, window shutters should be closed and secured. Anything subject to vandalism should be moved, if possible, to a location that affords greater protection. Establish plans to close air intakes to prevent entry of smoke or riot control agents. Enable all security systems to detect and prevent unauthorized entry.

Utilize one employee entrance that is controlled by security. Only employees scheduled to work should be allowed access to the building. Ensure that staff remaining on property during a protest are safe and secure, have reliable and redundant means of communications, and can
communicate with their families. Ensure protocols, procedures, and safe passageways have been identified in case a building must be evacuated. Plan for the emergency housing of employees in case staff cannot safely leave the building and sheltering is required.

Plan an alternate evacuation route or shelter-in-place strategy should the disturbance disrupt or block an orderly evacuation. Utilize mass notification, electronic mail, text messaging, or telephone call trees to inform employees about the current situation and how to receive official instructions. Inform staff about access to the building, evacuation from the building, travel paths to alternate exits from the building, accountability procedures, and any plans for building closure.

**Response to Civil Unrest**

Plans should prescribe that if protesters gather nearby or in multiple areas, unruly groups are on the move, acts of violence are threatened, or information regarding potential civil unrest is received from public safety agencies, the emergency operations plan will be activated. The building should be secured, the safety of occupants should be addressed, and persons not in the building should be warned to stay away.

Management, security, and incident management team(s) should be alerted. Upon alerting, leadership and team members should assemble, physically or virtually, to assess the situation. The situation analysis should evaluate the size, behavior, location, and movement of the crowd and the current state of security and preparedness.

- What is the nature of the group (persons with a grievance against the company or outsiders with no direct affiliation to the company or any tenant)?
- Is the crowd cooperative, celebratory, non-compliant, hostile, or combative?
- Is the crowd growing larger?
- Is the crowd threatening to, or committing violent acts against, people or property?
- Has a weapon been displayed?
- Are people or property at risk?

Alert law enforcement if they are not aware of the situation or to communicate that the crowd is growing, uncontrolable, threatening violence or vandalism, displaying weapons, or committing acts of violence or vandalism.

If the crowd remains outside and does not threaten the building, maintain the security of the building to prevent access. Communicate with occupants to warn them to stay away from the side of the building exposed to the crowd. Prepare them to take protective action—evacuation using an alternate path if available; continued sheltering inside if a safe path to exit is not available, trespassers haven’t entered the building and riot control agents, smoke, or fire don’t threaten building occupants; or lockdown if the mob enters the building and safe escape is not possible.

Results of the situation analysis should be compiled into a Situation Report (SitRep) and communicated to security, the incident management team, and management. Initial and periodic briefings of teams should share information, brief leaders, and inform decisions about protective actions, security, operational status, and communicating with employees and other stakeholders.

Unify command with law enforcement if possible and safe to do so. Communicate information about the crowd, identified crowd leadership, known grievance, and any unlawful acts. Provide information about the site or building as requested. Adjust strategies for protecting occupants and the property until the situation has stabilized.

**Instructions for Employees and Occupants**

Instruct employees, tenants, and others to avoid the area during civil unrest. If caught up in a crowd or civil unrest, take the following action:

- If a crowd is gathering in or near your path to the building, be cautious and move away from the crowd. Seek an alternate path to safety.
- If confronted by a demonstrator, do not act aggressively.
- If you get caught in the middle of the disturbance, keep your head and body protected and attempt to move to the edge of the crowd. If you fall, curl into a ball, and protect your head and neck. Get back up as soon as you are able.
- Do not confront rioters or looters to prevent property damage or looting of merchandise.
Do not disturb any evidence following criminal acts of vandalism, destruction of property, looting, or attempted arson.

Workplace Violence

Most acts of violence occur without warning, so the amount of time to react is minimal. Further challenging response, a perpetrator on the move prevents trained staff from directing movement to areas of refuge. Everyone needs to understand their options and quickly decide whether to run, hide, or fight. Drills should practice evacuation (running), lockdown, and sheltering-in-place.

Everyone should be familiar with the sound of the fire alarm system, emergency voice communication system, or mass notification system used for warning purposes. Everyone should know the primary and secondary paths to an exit and their primary and secondary assembly areas.

Employees should be familiar with their work areas so they will know where and how to take cover if a "lockdown" warning is broadcast and where to go if there is an order to "shelter in place."

If running to escape an act of violence, employees should leave belongings behind, raise their hands, and follow instructions of arriving law enforcement officers who at that time would not know who the perpetrator is. The locations of shelters safely away from the building and the need to check in with a supervisor for accountability should be stressed.

Employees should be instructed how to discretely communicate information about the location, description, and weapons carried by perpetrators. The availability of wired telephones and any limitations on wireless communications should be addressed. Sharing of mobile telephone numbers to enable communicating information via text messages should be explored.

Adults learn by doing, so drills are an important learning tool. Evacuation drills are also required by regulations. Design evacuation drills to challenge people to find a secondary exit, to test warning and notification systems, and to practice accounting for the safety of all evacuees. Use drills to practice broadcasting warning instructions and to evaluate the audibility and intelligibility of the warning signal and announcements.

Lockdown drills require only a limited amount of time and can be done in any weather. Prior to all drills, options should be reviewed, and the locations of exits and areas of refuge should be identified. Drills should reinforce the concept of seeking refuge, barricading, and hiding with lights out and devices silenced.

Engage public emergency services. Drills are an excellent opportunity to work together. The presence of fire and law enforcement personnel adds realism to drills and helps impress the importance of drills.

Exercises to familiarize personnel with plans for acts of violence are essential. The goals of these exercises should include defining roles and responsibilities; communicating lines of authority within the organization and with public emergency services; reviewing detection, alerting, warning, and communications capabilities, limitations, and interoperability; establishing incident command; familiarization with building layout and ingress and egress routes; access to video surveillance systems; and procedures for different types of incidents.

Related Preparedness Bulletins
- Risk Assessment
- Business Impact Analysis
- Acts of Violence
- Protective Actions for Life Safety
- Incident Management System
- Auditing Your Preparedness Program

Resources for Program Development, Implementation & Evaluation
A curated list of hundreds of links to resources to help with the development, implementation, and evaluation of a preparedness program can be found on the “Links to Program Resources” page of the Preparedness, LLC website.

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