

While the commercial real estate sector is accustomed to planning for a variety of emergencies, the 2024 election season poses a particular risk of extremist violence. The current environment calls for heightened vigilance and preparations to minimize potential disruptions and protect the safety of individuals and properties. As always, preparation is key: plan ahead, practice your plans, and coordinate with your BOMA local association.

PLAN IN ADVANCE

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page showing a blurred view of emergency lights, likely from a police car or fire truck, with red and blue lights visible against a dark background.

Develop a Plan

Work with property management and security personnel to develop policies and procedures to prepare and respond to an incident. Specify a clear chain of command, including who will make key decisions.

Review Your Property

Perform an inventory of possible problems, including property and building access points and any potential projectiles. Review fencing and lighting, and confirm the locations of the property line and easements.

Work with Public Safety Authorities

Coordinate in advance with your police department and other law enforcement groups, and involve them in planning and drills. Offer your assistance, such as providing space to assist with their operations if needed.

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 where communication is possible.

Be Ready to Communicate

Develop a communications plan and confirm your list of employees, tenants and vendors. Test your system for communicating, which must be operable at any time of day, and determine how press inquiries will be handled.

Practice the Plan

Hold tabletop exercises and physical rehearsals if possible—including building evacuations—with all employees, tenants and vendors; these can be held virtually if necessary for those who have not returned to work in the building.

PREPARING FOR AN INCIDENT

- Increase security measures and personnel; visible security can often act as a deterrent
- Ensure that any recording devices, closed-circuit televisions and cameras are operational
- Remove or repair items on or around the building that could be used as projectiles
- Secure construction sites, dumpsters and outdoor property (tables, chairs, planters)
- Consider covering all ground-floor glass windows and doors
- Implement access control procedures (close selected entrances, check IDs, post signage)
- Alter the building's routine (shift opening and closing times, encourage telework)
- Consider parking alternatives (off-site employee parking and shuttles)
- Circulate security's contact information so tenants and employees can request any assistance

DURING AN INCIDENT

- Establish communication and share updates with building tenants, customers and vendors
- Actively monitor the news and social media for up-to-date information
- Stay in contact with your chamber, downtown improvement district or other associations
- Announce which entrances and exits should be used during the event
- Consider how to handle protesters entering the building, and when to lockdown elevators
- Be an active observer and monitor anything unusual, but do not contact demonstrators
- Be especially vigilant about individuals attempting to use false contractor IDs
- Don't overreact: peaceful protests are lawful activities whether scheduled or spontaneous
- Determine when and how to lockdown a property and make a shelter-in-place announcement
- Coordinate with tenants but understand that you may not be able to prohibit them from leaving
- Determine when to contact the police in the event of a crime or dangerous situation