

Frequently Asked Questions

Occupational Health and Safety

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN VACATING AND CLOSING SITE



Planning for safe and effective site closures during the pandemic

We understand that in some circumstances, employers will be forced to vacate and close a site. We have prepared this FAQ sheet to provide some recommendations that will guide you through this process. We understand there may be other measures that may be appropriate in different circumstances; This sheet is not designed to provide a comprehensive policy but rather provide you with practical steps that you can adopt.

A site closure may have exposed your business to a variety of legal implications, insurance implications, financial implications and industrial relations implications. Accordingly, if you are considering shutting down a site you should contact either MBAV Advisory Team to seek advice.

What are some of the practical things I should consider if there is a forced industry shutdown to ensure my sites are secure and safe?

Members of the public can be put at risk when accessing construction sites that are not adequately secured. Potential dangers may include, amongst other things falls from partially built structures and scaffolding, live electrical power, open excavations or building waste and rubble. Accordingly, you must adopt the correct measures to minimise risks to health and safety of your employees and the public.

Some practical steps that may assist you include:

- You should conduct a risk assessment to understand what the potential risks are during the extended site closure (thinking about how it may impact the property, neighbours, trespassers, public, employees and contractors).
- Provide clear information on how long the site is going to be closed and who is responsible for the site during the closure.
- If the site needs to be accessed, ensure people can access it safely and free from obstructions.
- Document everything including information about who and when is accessing the site.
- You can consider implementing additional security measures such as CCTV, alarms, additional locks etc.

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- Check your insurance policies to ascertain whether they cover you during a shut-down period.
- Secure all materials that are on site.
- Be aware of the weather conditions which may impact the site.
- Take steps to prevent trespass, vandalism and theft. Consider removing ladders, hiding and removing tools and other equipment, secure all access points, including all hoardings and locks.
- Ensure all scaffolding is safe and secured. Keep in mind that weather conditions, such as high winds may expose you to risks.
- Ensure all excavators and other heavy machinery is secured and is not at risk of collapsing.
- Engage in fire risk assessment to ensure that the site and the surrounding buildings are not exposed to risks. Document everything, especially if you are taking actions to remove and isolate fuels, combustibles and other sources of ignition.
- Implement a site closure procedure.
- Document everything!

Additional information can be accessed on WorkSafe's website.

Do I need to have plant/machinery removed from site, locked out or is there anything else I need to consider with such equipment during a shutdown?

Where possible, you should remove the plant and machinery equipment from the site before site closure. Any plant that remains on the site must be left secure and safe.

You need to ensure that once the site is closed and you have left your plant and equipment on site, it is not at risk of moving (e.g. rolloing down a sloping surface) or won't be used by an authorised person.

You need to review and follow all of the plant or equipment manuals and procedures as well as manufacturer's instructions to ensure it is properly secured, operated and maintained. You need to be sure that all plant and machinery operators understand the correct usage of the equipment (eg how to ensure that the plant has been parked on a firm, level surface with the handbrake applied, the motor switched off and the key removed).

Also, Cranes/Tower Cranes must be shut off with lockable plates or hoarded off for security purposes. Crane operators must ensure the crane is put in the weathervane function.

Members should ensure their teams have arrangements in place for plant and equipment to be safely stowed, locked up or safeguarded after hours and when not in use.

What are some of the things I should consider when coming back to the site after a shutdown?

When re-opening sites, employers should consider the following:

Following all of the relevant directives of the Government and specifically the DHHS;

Confirming suitability of site amenities;

Inspecting existing control measures to confirm they remain safe and fit for purpose;

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Providing clear directions need to be provided to all employees and contractors and other parties that access the site;

Keeping open and transparent communications with employees and subcontractors to ensure employees understand the procedures that need to be followed and the tasks that need to be completed; and

Conducting site re-inductions.

While your site's been closed, animals and reptiles (including snakes) may have taken refuge on your construction site. Be extra vigilant when re-entering sites or when moving construction materials that may have been left sitting undisturbed over the holiday period. Snakes or animals can be removed by wildlife controllers. For more information, contact the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 136 186.

Prior to the re-commencement of work onsite, it's important that any existing control measures are inspected to make sure that they remain safe and fit for purpose. Employers and employees should check that power, water, toilets and fencing are ready to go and conduct pre-start inspections of the site to ensure that risks are minimised.

You can access WorkSafe's website for further information on preparing for a pandemic, planning for safety on construction sites, housekeeping inspection checklist and reminder on workplace safety when returning to work.

Who should I notify before shutting down a site?

There are many different stakeholders who you may consider notifying or consult when closing a site. Some of those parties may include, but are not limited to:

DHHS

Subcontractors

Workers

Unions

Regulators – WorkSafe, EnergySafe, VBA

Your company lawyers

Your Industry Association

Your Insurers

For more information,
contact the team at MBV at
mbassist@mbav.com.au or (03) 9411 4555



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Your Client

Local Government

Government agencies, for example, VicRoads, Rail Projects Victoria, Department of Land Water Environment and Planning etc

Neighbours who are impacted by the construction site in its current form

Power Companies

If you would like more information, please reach out to the team at Master Builders Victoria on (03) 9411 4555 or at mbassist@mbav.com.au.

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contact the team at MBV at
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