

Property Managers\Owners Guide to Preparing Commercial Office Buildings for Demonstrations & or Protests

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Overview: Any commercial office building occupied in whole or in part by one or more controversial organizations, is at some point, likely to have protestors attend its site. They may simply want to picket and delay employees, suppliers or contractors from entering long enough to disrupt or slow down onsite operations. Alternatively, they may attempt to enter and occupy the building or at least the floor or floors, occupied by the tenant they have a dispute with. Once protestors have occupied the floor or floors of the tenant or tenants they have a dispute with, they will invite media supportive of their cause and their own IT team into the spaces they have occupied. Removal of protestors inside the building by police will be difficult and time consuming. Planning is necessary to ensure that the building and/or only targeted floors are **not occupied by protestors** and that normal operation continues within the building even if there are numerous protestors chanting while parading around the building perimeter on public property, while also blocking or at least delaying vehicles at entry points to parking and shipping\receiving. **Protestors on the exterior should be handled by the police unless they have moved onto private company property.**

Management Planning for Demonstrations: Planning for protestors and initiating steps to protect the building will be much easier if you know when they are coming. Direct your IT department to join the protest groups or groups, social media feeds **using a generic email address that cannot be linked to the building and/or company.** Only send them positive feed back – “Great to see that we are going to teach those bastards a lesson on the 17th” Even consider making a small **anonymous** financial contribution to the protest group or groups to

ensure that you continue to receive the emails\newsletters they are sending to their membership. Once you are aware of the coming protest be sure to confirm with your local police that they are aware of the date and time of the forthcoming protest and any other relevant information you have received such as the number of protestors the protests group or groups have advised are attending. Be aware that these groups often over state the number of anticipated attendees.

Exterior Preparations: Remove anything that could be used as a missile such as waste receptacles, river rocks or potted plants or ashtrays small enough to be picked up and thrown. In the winter consider spraying any river rocks with water and freezing them in place. Replacing river rocks with white sand is a permanent solution. Bring anything inside that could be useful to protestors such as benches not secured to pavement and salt or sand boxes light enough to be moved easily to block vehicle entrances. If there are any easy to damage or steal exterior art objects bring them inside also. Protestors may see them as trophies. Request local newspaper vendors to remove all their nearby boxes for the day of the protest. If they are unable or unwilling to do so, secure their boxes to utility poles etcetera , with very strong chains and robust padlocks such as Abus Granite. This will prevent them from being used to block\delay traffic on nearby streets or from being laid across on property sidewalks as a tripping hazard. Also ensure that any fuel intakes such as the one for any on site diesel generator are metal and that they have robust metal caps secured with high security padlocks such as Abus Granite. If the fuel intake is not currently covered by a video surveillance camera ideally if possible\practical one should be re-aimed to record any attempt to sabotage the generator fuel supply.

Exterior Doors: All card reader equipped exterior doors should remain on card access 24/7 on the day of the protest. Also on the day of the

protest if the perimeter entrance door card readers have key pads they should be activated. This means that if a protestor finds or steals an access card they will not be able to use it unless its PIN has been written on it. Ideally 2 or more experienced and well trained guards should be deployed on the exterior (while safe to do so) and should ask all incoming persons they do not know to show their access card.

Persons with no access card should be asked to call their in building contact to come and escort them into the building and sign them in at the lobby. Note: These exterior guards ARE NOT TO BE ISSUED KEYS as experienced hard core protestors will likely attempt to steal them.

If a person with no access card claims to be an employee contact a supervisor with the tenant company for confirmation that they are an employee.

Elevators: (i) Ideally all elevators should remain on card access 24/7 until the protestors disperse. If a person arrives and says they are here to see a specific tenant either call the tenant to come to the lobby to meet and escort their guest or depending on the number of Guards on hand have a Guard escort the visitor to the floor of the tenant they are visiting.

(ii) If the situation on the exterior is deteriorating and it looks like the protestors may breach the perimeter, the elevators are to be taken to an upper floor and taken out of service. The building access control system is to be used to lock out or take the elevator card readers off line. NOTE: This way no access cards can be used by employees or demonstrators to take the elevators to other floors. This reduces the risk of vandalism to both the elevators or other tenant spaces.

Lobby Stairwell Doors: They are to be locked 24/7 starting at 05:00 (5am) the day of the protest or as soon as any protestors are observed to be in the neighborhood. Some health conscious tenants like to walk

up to their floor and can be expected to complain when access to the stairwell is denied.

Note: These doors are to be locked only on the building\lobby side NOT the stairwell side. This is to ensure that in the event of a fire alarm, fire or other emergency building occupants can still safely evacuate.

Floor Stairwell Doors: All stairwell doors on all floors **except cross over floors** are to be kept locked 24/7 on the day of the protest. It is illegal under any circumstances to lock cross over floor doors so at least one guard should be assigned to each crossover floor stairwell door. Given that the ground floor stairwell doors will be locked to prevent anyone from entering the stairwells management may or may not want to spend money on this “nice to have “ guard coverage that may or may not be necessary.

Building HVAC : Use of pepper spray, and\or tear gas by Canadian police services occurs very rarely. However if property management has a concern about its possible use they should check with local police. If police advise that they are likely to use it management should consider the following: Both pepper spray and tear gas are heavier than air . Avoid the use of ground level air intakes if possible. Ideally use only roof top air intakes. To prevent leakage of pepper spray or tear gas into the building run the building fans at 110% of current atmospheric pressure. Also have **plastic** buckets of water outside any entrance in use by employees. Anyone who has been pepper sprayed or who was come into contact with tear is to use the water in the plastic buckets to wash it off before coming into the building. Once either substance gets into the building it is very hard to dispose of its odor .

On Site Parking: To prevent entry of protestors hiding in vehicles **daily fee parking should be cancelled**. Only monthly parkers with access cards or transponders will still be allowed access. Two guards should be

deployed at the parking lot entrance to advise any incoming drivers without a parking access card that they cannot park here today and that daily fee parking will resume the day after the protest.

Access Control System Data Base Management: Employees should be advised to immediately report any lost missing or stolen access card so it can be quickly deleted from the access control system before a protestor can use it to enter the building. Buildings that are regularly picketed by protestors should consider investing in access control software with the inactive card management feature. Both C-Cure by software house and Lenovo have this feature. It continuously scans the access card software database for cards that are active but not in regular use. It can be an access card that an employee picked up from the desk of an employee that resigned or that a passerby picked up from the side walk in front of the building or that a visitor found in on site parking, etcetera. The period of non use varies from company to company. For example, a business that has been in operation for 30 + years may give long term employees 4 weeks vacation so the non-use period would likely be 5 weeks. When an access control system using this software discovers such an access card, it will automatically do one or more of the following as selected by management:

- (i) Advise the system administrator
- (ii) Restrict the cards access to day time Monday to Friday
- (iii) Void the access card in question

Protestors or other persons with grudges against the building or a specific tenant will often look for dropped access cards on the building perimeter especially near building entrances or if easily accessible any employee parking area.

Conclusion: Most commercial buildings can be protected from demonstrators by appropriate planning, sensible exterior and interior

preparations, ongoing communication with the local police,
pre-ordering sufficient guard coverage and use of up to date access
control software.