Good Practice Guide
Lockdown in Government Workplaces

This guide helps government organisations to think about locking down government workplaces.

Overview

Locking down a government workplace (a "lockdown") can be an effective way of responding to a serious incident. Lockdowns occur at times of high stress and are not generally invoked lightly. As such, government organisations should help frontline workers to make difficult decisions about lockdowns at difficult times.

Government organisations can achieve this by providing frontline workers with clarity and certainty about how, why, and when lockdowns are appropriate. This means having policies, procedures, and guidance. It also means providing the training and drills needed to ensure that, when trouble strikes, workers have the information, confidence, skills, and guidance available to respond effectively.

Every incident is, to some extent, unique. It is therefore impossible for organisations to develop policies and procedures that exactly address all potential situations. However, organisations can ensure workers have the necessary guidance, systems and training in order to respond to situations as they arise.

What 'lockdown' means

Lockdown is a term used to describe securing a building or site by controlling the access and/or egress of people to and from a government workplace. A workplace would usually trigger a lockdown for significant threats or hazards that impact on the health, safety, or security of people and assets in the workplace.

There are three broad types of lockdown:

- full lockdown
- partial lockdown
- staged lockdown.

Full lockdown

A full lockdown means halting all movements in and or out of a workplace to exclude or contain people to keep them safe from harm.

In many ways, a lockdown is the opposite of an evacuation. An evacuation moves people from a dangerous situation to a less dangerous situation.

By contrast, a lockdown holds people in safer situations and prevents them from moving to a less safe situation - whether that is inside or outside of the workplace.

Partial lockdown

A partial lockdown means halting movement in and/or out of part of a workplace instead of the whole facility or building or place.

Partial lockdowns can apply to one place or to a number of places. Multiple partial lockdowns can also occur at the same time or over time.

Staged lockdown

Staged lockdowns are pre-planned and are triggered in response to an evolving hazard or threat.

Other responses

There are other sorts of organisational responses that are similar to or related to lockdowns such as:

- holding people in situ
- providing emergency shelter.

Holding people in situ

This is when a workplace may ask people to remain in a workplace until some external threat (unrelated to the business of the government organisation) has passed. These tend to be ad hoc, temporary arrangements.

For example, a workplace may want to prevent people from exiting a building because there is a potentially violent protest occurring outside - even if the protest is not specifically focused on the organisation or workplace.

These tend to be voluntary but they may also involve locking exterior doors, for example.

Emergency shelter

Workplaces may sometimes encourage people to remain inside a workplace until some sort of external hazard, like a natural disaster, has passed or there is no longer an imminent threat. These tend to be event-based, temporary arrangements. They

also tend to be voluntary and not involve actually 'locking the facility'.

Lockdown policy and procedures

It is good practice for government organisations to have lockdown policies and procedures at both a national and local/site level.

Matters lockdown policies and procedures should cover include:

- pre-planning activities

- situations and thresholds for triggering lockdowns (it is particularly important for organisations to anticipate all of the potential situations and contexts that might lead to a lockdown situation)

- authorities for implementing or terminating lockdowns

- local logistical requirements and lockdown management procedures

- resources to help people implement lockdowns under difficult situations

- training and drills

- communication and media statements

- escalation

- terminating/ending

- coordination with emergency services

- recovering from a lockdown

- reporting and notifications requirements

- learning and review.

Some specific good practices government organisations may want to consider when thinking about lockdowns:

Risk

It is good practice for organisations to provide decision makers with the tools and capability to assess risks associated with the threat and a possible lockdown.

Prior to commencing a lockdown, a decision-maker must be able to assess quickly whether locking people inside a building is putting them at greater risk than allowing them to leave.

Authorising lockdowns

It is good practice to identify who has the authority to invoke a lockdown. The authorities may differ according to situations and types of lockdown. Authority can be as broad as enabling any person to

initiate certain types of lockdowns in certain situations or as narrow as requiring the authority of certain individuals.

A lockdown alert

It is good practice for an organisation to ensure it has a unique alert for lockdowns. The reason for this is that alerts such as fire alarms normally signal evacuation. Whereas a lockdown requires staff to remain inside the building. Regularly drilling the different types of alerts and alarms is also good practice so that staff can easily differentiate alarms. Some more advanced systems can provide instructions to staff.

Building and or site plans

It is good practice to undertake a full site and building review when planning a lockdown approach. The end result of this includes having an up-to-date site/building plan/map that informs the lockdown approach and can be shared with local emergency responders.

Things to consider when conducting a site or building review are:

- identify access and egress points and locks

- determine the layout, design and dimensions of the workplace

- mark out zones such as command points, safe areas, insecure areas, and safe or retreat areas

- identify emergency egress points (which are likely to be a subset of all egress points) and evacuation routes

- identify communication and power access points

- air conditioning systems

- identify any critical equipment

- mark out all glazing noting sight-lines, strength, and other factors.

It is good practice for organisations to model the types of scenarios that might occur and ensure physical systems (such as locks and layout) support the intended responses. For example, you may want to consider whether and how workers can manually lock doors to prevent intruders inside the building from accessing people or critical systems.

Identify command posts

It is good practice for local workplaces to identify areas in a workplace where a person can take command of the local situation. This place should be equipped to support a command function. This

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might include having communication and things like site maps securely located in that space.

You should consider factors such as location, access, communication. You should also consider a 'fail over' provision where a remote command post can be established outside of a workplace.

Safe refuges

It is good practice to consider where within a building or site workers and customers can take refuge. Larger sites may consider having safe areas where people can retreat to. A good refuge site might be lockable, have limited glazing and limited site-lines, and also have its own communication point (phone or radios).

It is also good practice to ensure that workers are aware of (and use) evacuation gather points. This ensures that emergency services have some certainty about who is locked down and who is not. This is particularly important where partial or staged lockdowns are used (i.e. where part of a workplace is locked down while other parts are evacuated).

Make it easy for emergency services

It is good practice to make things easy for emergency services by:

- sharing site/building plans with local emergency services

- retaining up-to-date copies of plans off-site

- involving local emergency services in drills

- labelling exterior doors in a conspicuous and easy manner so that emergency services have certainty about egress points.

Back up communications

It is good practice for workplaces to provide backup communications such as portable radio telephone devices and walkie-talkie type radios on site.

Co-located or multiple occupation sites

It is good practice for workplaces to consider co-tenanted locations, co-located agencies or neighbours and factor these into planning, by:

- involving them in lockdown actions or how to get notified of their lockdown decisions

- establishing mutual notification protocols

- co-ordinated teams of contacts with people from all of the organisations in the location.

Links with other emergency responses

It is good practice to ensure lockdown processes and procedures are appropriately linked with other emergency plans such as:

- fire and emergency

- hazardous substance spills or losses of containment including things like gas leaks

- natural disasters and extreme weather events.

Flexibility

It is also good practice to provide sufficiently flexible plans to enable people to respond to situations sensibly. For example, a lockdown procedure may require people to remain in place during a lockdown unless there is a life and death situation and escaping is sensible and safe.

Flexibility also means having the capacity and flexibility to ensure the safety of everyone in a building including visitors, customers, and others such as contractors. Planning should anticipate and cover details such as how people other than workers are notified and looked after.

Communication and media

It is good practice to consider how you will communicate lockdowns to affected workers, customers and other people, how a lockdown is communicated within your wider organisation and how media/public statements about the lockdown are handled.

It is equally important to consider how the "all clear" will be reliably communicated to all those affected by a lockdown. It is useful to ensure this is also drilled as intensively as the alert system.

Prepare post-incident legal action

It is good practice to ensure lockdown procedures help support possible post-incident investigative action (although not at the expense of safety). This includes:

- providing guidance on observation and taking note of details

- preserving physical evidence

- keeping an incident log (if possible)

- collecting statements and collecting detailed debrief information from everyone involved directly in an incident.

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Elements of good practice

Elements from the organisational perspective

- implementing and communicating policies and procedures
- identifying decision makers and levels of authority
- undertaking drills and learning.

Steps for invoking a lockdown

- assessing threats (capability, capacity, intent, imminence, locale, etc.)
- deciding type of lockdown (partial, progressive, or full)
- communicating a lockdown (affected, more broadly within the organisation and externally)
- logging the incident and keeping records
- notifying neighbours and other occupants
- ensuring people know it's not a drill.

Assigning responsibilities

- Office in Control arrangements
- senior team points of contact for multi-tenancy/co-located facilities
- working with Police and or any other emergency services - including handover protocols
- locking exits
- exit control duties
- notifications (senior managers, regulators etc.).

Guidance for occupants

- how to survive: e.g. stay away from windows and doors - shut off lights - remain calm and quiet
- not engaging with a threatening individual unless you have to and you are able to
- staying put or withdrawing to safe areas or fleeing (when and how etc.)
- phones (including private mobiles) used only for lockdown reasons
- how occupants (workers and visitors) get instructions
- using supplies during extended lockdowns
- ensuring health issues such as diabetes, heart problems and other potential issues are identified.

Recovery

- resuming operations (when and how)
- debrief, review and learning
- making any required notifications - such as completing a Police report or reporting a notifiable event (if there was one) to WorkSafe New Zealand (you may also have internal notifications to make).

Post-incident

- supporting affected people (through Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), counselling, etc.)
- enabling post-event legal processes/remedies (preserve evidence, take notes, participate in legal proceedings, etc.).