

VACANT BUILDINGS

What is the hazard?

A building that stands vacant can be subjected to an increased risk of loss. Damage to the buildings can range from minor cosmetic damage to the complete loss of the facility.



The risk may increase due to:

- The personnel are not present to detect and react to problems.
- The utilities are sometimes turned-off without any consideration of the consequences.
- Maintenance is often ignored.
- The building can be an easy target for people such as thieves, vandals, or arsonists.

How to reduce the risk

- Secure the perimeter of the site and all of the doors and windows to the buildings. In vulnerable areas the boarding-up of the windows and glass doors may be necessary and the removal of fixed access to building roofs should be considered.
- The local police should be informed that the building is vacant and asked to keep an eye on the site when passing.
- Consider hiring a security service company.
- The buildings should be cleared of all interior furniture and other combustible materials. Non-combustible racking may remain in warehouses if necessary.
- The outdoor areas should be cleared of all combustible materials.
- The building's heating should be maintained to provide a minimum background temperature particularly where water pipes are present to prevent them from being damaged through freezing. As an alternative all of the water services should be drained and isolated at the mains with the exception of the sprinkler systems. If the water services are not drained, a water alarm should be installed.
- The electricity should be isolated as far as possible, with the fuses being removed. However, the power should be maintained for the essential services.
- Automatic fire detection, where installed, should be maintained.
- CCTV and intruder detection systems, where installed, should remain fully operational.
- Sprinkler systems, where installed, should remain fully functional.
- Weekly inspections of the facility should be carried out. This should also include essential building maintenance, for example the clearing of leaves from roof drains during the autumn and the removal of snow load during the winter, etc.
- The external lighting, where installed, should be maintained.
- Rodents and other animals can colonize the buildings, including the electrical rooms, and destroy the insulation of cables, which could result in the possibility of short circuits and fires. To avoid this, poisoned stations should be installed and placed in the right spots, utilising a specialised contractor.
- Some equipment such as large motors, alternators, open type transformers etc. are vulnerable if subjected to long periods of disconnection and need either moisture preventive measures and/or control, internal heating devices, usually present by construction in larger equipment, or simply being kept switched on for those long periods.

Large beams and rolls of paper machines, bearings or other rotating equipment need to be turned or operated now and then in order to avoid degreasing of metal rotating parts and/or bending through proper weight. The OEM should be contacted to obtain information about the best storage practices.

- Remove from the premises any possible radioactive sources that are used in some measurement apparatus.



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