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Briefing Note

CECA Member Briefing:

Advice on Temporary Suspension of Sites

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1. Overview

This document has been prepared by the Construction Leadership Council to help construction companies and clients ensure a controlled shutdown of sites and facilities where work must be suspended due to the current coronavirus threat. It should be noted that current UK Government does not require all construction sites to close. However, it is recognised that, whether through choice or because it will not be possible to comply with the Standard Operating Procedures, many sites are closing or will close temporarily. This guidance is intended to ensure that any shutdown is safe and allows the site to recommence operations promptly after the suspension is lifted.

Each site operator should carry out their own risk assessment that considers all local factors.

2. Commercial & legal issues

Your legal obligations

Owners of sites have a legal duty of care to any visitors to sites, even in the event of trespass. As such, companies have an obligation to minimise safety risks on sites even during shutdowns by making efforts to prevent access to the suspended site, and mitigation of any potential hazards.

Suspending work – contractual issues

A separate note on contractual issues associated with suspending work has been published by the Construction Leadership Council ([here](#)). Ensure that you maintain dialogue between client and supplier in suspending works and do so with reference to any contractual requirements.

3. Suspension planning

Closedown plan

You should have a structured plan to carry out your shutdown. The level of detail of this plan will reflect the size and complexity of the site. This plan may consider:

- Defining and prioritising the critical functions of the site
- Analysing the emerging risks to the site
- Review of security measures and ongoing monitoring
- Detailing the agreed response
- Identifying key contacts
- Having in place a flexible response structure to deal with a wide range of incidents
- Formulating consolidated plans and management systems
- Building a communications structure for both internal and external communications
- Documenting the status of progress on site, producing a simple 'as built' or agreeing works completed to facilitate smoother restart.
- Review of site insurances including any supply chain plant or equipment
- Ensure emergency service access plans and provisions are in place and the site closure is communicated to the local fire brigade.

A full site walkthrough should be undertaken in the run up to the closure to ensure that all of the points in this plan have been addressed prior to the closure.

4. Site safety

General housekeeping

Site pathways should be kept free from obstructions. Waste and loose material should be removed from site, or secured if this is not practical. Provide clearly visible emergency contacts on site hoardings in the event of any incident during the shutdown.

Scaffolding and temporary works

All scaffolding and temporary works should be made secure and checked prior to the shutdown.

Further checks may need to take place after adverse weather conditions and a detailed check carried out before re-use. A procedure should be in place to ensure remedial action can be carried out if necessary.

Prevent access to scaffolding and working platforms with suitable signage, making sure it cannot be accessed by anyone if not inspected within the previous 7 days.

Agree an inspection regime during the shutdown to ensure they do not become unsafe.

Suitably extended intervals between inspections should be determined by risk assessment and will be dependent the type, construction and location of the scaffolding, as well as its potential exposure to the elements.

When sites re-open it will be necessary for inspections to be carried out before any works can recommence on the scaffolding. These will be conducted as soon as possible but will be managed on a staggered basis, owing to expected demand in a short space of time.

Stability of part-built structures

Ensure that an assessment has been made of any part-built structures, and appropriate temporary support has been provided where needed. Any temporary work may have to be inspected regularly by a competent person in case of deterioration. The frequency of inspection will depend on the nature of the site. A procedure should be in place to ensure remedial action can be carried out if necessary.

Excavations

All excavations should be back-filled or covered over if feasible. Edge protection should be installed where not, and fall under the above requirements for inspection as temporary works, and assessment made of how to avoid any collapse of the excavation during the shutdown. Ensure that systems needed to prevent failures, such as dewatering, are maintained and will operate during a sustained shutdown. In some cases e.g. where an excavation is near a structure, regular inspection may be required. The frequency of inspection will depend on the nature of the site. A procedure should be in place to ensure remedial action can be carried out if necessary.

Cranes

Manufacturers guidelines should be followed in terms of preparing cranes for any period where they will be out of use. All tower cranes anti-climb hatches must be locked, and aviation lighting must remain operational throughout the shutdown period. Where practicable lay the jib down for crawler cranes

Identify for any tower or gantry cranes, if the Thorough Examination certification are due to expire within the next 12 week and inform the responsible people for appropriate action.

Power

Ensure that reliable power supplies are available for all systems, such as lighting, that are required to maintain site safety during the shutdown. Non-essential services to be turned off and made completely safe. A procedure should be put in place to be covered the works required to implement these changes. Electrical Appointed Persons to be identified on call out plan in event of power loss. Refuelling of temporary generator power to be considered.

Fire risk

Carry out a fire risk assessment, particularly where the site has significant use of timber frames, and where fuel is stored on site (all diesel fuel points to be banded and securely locked off). Flammable substances are to be removed from site (Petrol, LPG, Butane Oxyacetylene etc.). Access to the emergency services is maintained at all times i.e. tender routes and hydrants not blocked by plant.

Services

All water systems to be drained down to prevent damage through burst pipes. Temporary supplies to the site to be isolated at the stopcock. All gas supplies to be turned off at the meter. A procedure should be put in place to be covered the works required to implement these changes.

5. Site security

Perimeter check

Carry out a perimeter check prior to the shutdown to make sure that it is not possible to access the site, and that any hoardings are in good order and weather-resistant. Also carry out checks on site accommodation and storage to confirm that it is secure prior to closedown, and secure any openings/open roofs in unfinished structures to prevent weather-damage. Periodic checks may be necessary in the event of high winds. A procedure should be in place to ensure remedial action can be carried out if necessary.

Securing plant, equipment and materials

Wherever possible all equipment should be removed from site, or stored in secure containers or buildings. Hired plant should be returned to the hirer where feasible. Owned plant should be removed from site, or left in a safe position, with windows and doors locked securely and with all starting mechanisms isolated with keys locked away in a secure location. Try to reduce stocks of materials kept on site. Secure any remaining materials. Ensure unfixed materials and open work faces are protected and guarded against deterioration during the pause of work.

Site security

Appropriate security provision should be made for the site, whether staffed or remote. This provision must also recognise that some security staff may be absent due to illness as a result of Covid-19, and therefore additional resource may be required.

Access to site

A nominated person or persons (usually site security) should be appointed to hold site keys/access. Clarity should also be provided on who will be allowed to access the site during the shutdown, noting that inspections will be required for scaffolding, execution and other activities. Any access beyond this list must be cleared by the site owner. Consideration should be given to extending the list of nominated persons in the event the appointed person is having to self isolate.

Third party access

Identify a list of third parties (such as utility companies) that may need to access the site. Define the areas that will need to be accessible and make sure that they are not obstructed. Contact third parties to let them know about the shutdown, and make arrangements for their access (including accompaniment where required). Keep records of any third party visits.

Insurance

Revisit your insurance policies relating to the site and make sure that they remain appropriate for the temporary closure. Inform your insurer of the shutdown if required.

Supply chain

Ensure that suppliers have adequate notice of any closedown to ensure that they can enact their own activities to secure their assets, and to remove anything from site that they will need during the period of closure.

6. Contacts

Ensure that multiple contacts are available for all significant organisations related to the site. This will include:

- Client
- Main contractor
- Key subcontractors
- Third parties
- Emergency services
- Local authority
- Personnel carrying out inspections
- Personnel rectifying faults after inspection

As a result of Covid-19 it is possible that main points of contact may not be available, so it is recommended that three contacts are identified for each organisation, with name, job title, mobile and email contact.

7. Special consideration for environmental issues

River, coast and reservoir issues

Where the site is near a river, estuary or the coast, where there is a risk of flooding or coastal erosion:

- You must determine and provide temporary arrangements including monitoring arrangements to avoid increased risks of flooding or coastal erosion with consequent risk to life and property.
- River or coastal defences must not be left in a compromised, lowered, weakened, or unstable condition. Works must not be left impeding a river channel unless agreed with the risk management authority.

Where a site impacts a reservoir covered by the Reservoirs Act, temporary arrangements must be agreed with the reservoir panel engineer.

Where a site poses a risk of pollution, you should ensure this risk is removed or minimised prior to the shutdown and that monitoring arrangements are put in place if necessary to ensure that any new risks arising are promptly dealt with. If the activity requires a permit you should ensure you notify the regulator of the shutdown and how you intend to comply with any relevant conditions to prevent pollution occurring.

Water related risks (including over-pumping and dewatering activities)

- Assess the risk of all activities that may directly impact water quality and plan for worst case scenario (ie the weather is currently dry and warm, but could change significantly over coming weeks).
- Where possible and safe to do so, any activities that could impact on the water environment that can be halted should be done so to minimise risk of uncontrolled future failure.
- If working within a flood plain, move all plant and equipment to higher ground in case water levels rise while the site activities are suspended.

- For water management processes that need to remain in place, ensure operational control is maintained (many of these systems can be used remotely for relatively long periods of time). The maintenance regime (including refuelling of pumps) will need to be considered.
- Make plans to monitor the site either remotely where possible (ie CCTV) or ensure regular checks are carried out during the period the site activities are suspended.
- Ensure drains are protected from uncontrolled run off that may contain pollutants.

Waste management related risks

- Where possible, ensure all skips and bins (particularly if containing biodegradable waste) are collected and emptied in advance of the site closing.
- If not possible, ensure all waste containers are covered and secured.
- Ensure any hazardous wastes (eg soils containing asbestos, COSHH wastes) are secured and signage erected that highlights their harmful nature.

Ecology related risks

- The majority of ecological species will not present an environmental risk while activities are suspended, but consider risk of vermin if bins are not able to be emptied.
- Where possible, ensure that any critical elements that will require immediate utilisation once works resume are protected from nesting birds that could use the quiet period of reduced activity to nest on works equipment, plant or work faces.
- Due to the timing (spring season) when work does resume consideration should be given to the risk of other protected species establishing habitat in or around construction sites. A thorough check should be made of all work areas prior to recommencing activities.

8. Guidance on hired plant and equipment

Contract clauses may be in place which state the hire company's and customer's positions from a purely contractual point of view. The current situation may fall outside the scope of these contractual arrangements. Hire company and customer may agree to deviate from the strict contractual position. The correct course of action will need to be assessed for each set of circumstances, and should take into account:

- The period of notice given to the hire company of shutdown, and the practicality of them collecting the plant in line with government advice and in line with the current Standard Operating Procedures;
- How long the site may be closed for (some sites are closing for short periods while the work is re-programmed and re-organised);
- Whether the customer has hired-in plant insurance that will continue during shutdown.

Under circumstances where the plant remains on hire during the closedown period, the plant hire company and customer should try to reach an agreement whereby:

1. The hire company charges an agreed rate (this may be different from the contractual rate);
2. The contract and all conditions that are not frustrated or otherwise agreed as different therefore remain in force;
3. The customer remains responsible for safety and security of the plant while it is on site;
4. If the plant is to be collected, the hire company and customer agree when and how this will happen, that it is done in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures, and the customer will allow access to the plant.

9. Checklist

Commercial & Legal Issues

- Have you engaged with your client/suppliers in relation to commercial and contractual issues regarding the suspension?
- Have you undertaken a progress drop line to record where site progress is up to at point of suspension and supported where possible with photographic records?

Suspension planning

- Have you prepared a site suspension plan?
- Have you carried out a pre-suspension site walk?
- Have you updated Emergency Access Plans and notified local services?

Site safety

- Are all walkways on the site clear?
- Is any loose material secured?
- Is there clear signage with emergency contacts available?
- Is all scaffolding and temporary works secured?
- Have you developed plans for routine inspection of scaffolding and temporary works, and inspection in the event of adverse weather?
- Have you assessed any part built structures, and put in place temporary support where required?
- Have you established an inspection regime and how you will approach any remedial works to support part built structures?
- Have all excavations been backfilled or covered?
- Have you considered the risk of collapse of any excavations, and ensured that systems to prevent this are in place and can be maintained?
- Are all cranes securing as recommended by manufacturers?
- Is a secure power supply in place for essential services?
- Are all non-essential services switched off?
- Has a fire risk assessment been undertaken?
- Are all flammable substances secured or removed from site?
- Have you drained down all water suppliers, and turned off gas supplies?

Site security

- Have you carried out a perimeter check of the site?
- Have you confirmed all accommodation and storage on the site is secure?
- Is all plant, equipment and material secured or removed from site?
- Is all hired plant removed from site (where appropriate to do so)?
- Have fully resourced arrangements been made for site security (on-site and remote)?
- Has a nominated persons been identified to manage site access including keys in the event the nominated person is in isolation?
- Has a list of those who can access the site during the shutdown been prepared and shared?
- Have arrangements been made to allow third party access to the site where needed?
- Have you checked your insurance policies and informed your insurer that the site will be suspended?
- Have you provided suppliers with sufficient notice to make their own preparations for the suspension?

Contacts

- Have you established multiple contacts for each key organisation in relation to the site?