

## Recent events and developments

Around the world, businesses and other organizations are beginning to consider when and how to re-open their offices abroad. The EU and the WHO have documented some best practices on how to effectively return to a safe workplace. While the health of employees is currently on the foreground when deciding the timing and modalities of reopening offices, the more conventional security risks pertaining office security should not be overlooked.

### Assessment

Once the physical distancing measures achieve an abundant reduction in COVID-19 transmission rates, governments are likely to authorize a gradual resumption of work mobility. While it is a truism that occupational safety and health assessments need to be implemented, there is a risk that the omnipresence of COVID-19 causes organizations to overlook conventional security implications commonly associated with (re-)opening office. The deterioration of living conditions across the globe will likely prompt increased levels of crime and civil unrest. It is therefore imperative to re-assess the neighbourhood in which your office is situated and check if physical security measures are still well up to par after weeks of closure.

### Impact

Constituting a document containing all appropriate measures will largely benefit an organizations capacity to effectively resume their operational reach in the workplace. Preventive measures can help to minimize the risk of transmissions of COVID-19 in the workplace and ensure worker confidence. In addition to health and safety measures, bolstering the physical security of your office will help to protect your staff from future spikes in crime rates, civil unrest, natural disasters and sporadic violence. As a second wave should not be discarded in many places across the globe, contingency planning (including phased-evacuation plans) is key to minimize the impact of future government restrictions.

## Advice from Expat Preventive:

- Conduct a physical security risks assessment to ascertain whether access control, surveillance, and territorial reinforcements are up-to-date in light of COVID-19 and other conventional security risks that may have increased.
- Implement a facilities management policy with a detailed orientation towards cleaning and maintenance, car parking, toilet facilities, access control and entry-exit strategies.
- Identify – based on your Business Resumption Plan – who are essential staff to return to the office first. Introduce daily employee work shifts to prevent crowds and encourage those within the risk groups (e.g. age 55-60+, chronic disease) to work remotely.
- Re-arrange the office space so distance between employees is constantly abided and ensure that the workplace is clean and hygienic. Display stations throughout the office with hygienic equipment (e.g. hand sanitizers, tissues) and personal protection equipment.
- Brief your employees that anyone with a mild cough or low-grade fever of 37.2 C should stay home. Distribute posters and brochures to inform employees on best practices and protocols.
- Develop a plan in case someone becomes ill at one of the workplaces. For the time being, consider putting the ill person in an isolated area or room to prevent the spread.
- Assure that phased-evacuation plans are in place and tested. This entails knowing when (and who is going to decide) to scale-down, hibernate, relocate and (partially) evacuate. These plans should be based on the monitoring of risk level indicators (e.g. COVID-19 cases, movement restrictions, civil unrest etc.) to ensure your office is prepared for a potential second wave.

### Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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