

LOSS CONTROL NEWSLETTER

June 2020

Auto-Owners
INSURANCE



7 Steps to Smoothly Reopen Your Building

COVID-19 has temporarily shut the doors of many businesses across the nation. While employee safety remains the top priority, it's important to consider your vacant property and how to effectively reopen. Although some businesses such as restaurants and medical facilities may require special reopening tasks, here is a list of general items to help the return go smoothly for your building and its systems.

1. ASSESS PROPERTY

Designate a key employee with assigned recovery responsibilities to return to the facility, assess conditions, document damages, and notify the business owner, key managers, etc., of their findings.

- Inspect the perimeter for signs of trespassers and damage to property (*outdoor inventory*) and building components (*windows, walls, personnel doors*).
- Look for signs of rodent and insect infestation.
- Inspect domestic plumbing (*water piping that supplies water to the water heater and to all fixtures within a building*) and turn on the water supply line to individual fixtures such as sinks and toilets.
- Check your HVAC air filters and replace if necessary.
- Consider thoroughly cleaning the facility, paying special attention to heavy usage areas such as event centers, gym/locker rooms and restrooms. Follow CDC recommendations* for cleaning guidance.
- If there were any severe weather events during the temporary closure, inspect your roof for signs of damage or ponding water. Hire a licensed contractor to mitigate any damage found.

2. NOTIFY ESSENTIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS/PARTNERS OF YOUR RETURN

- Fire and security-alarm monitoring companies
- Local police department
- Insurance company
- Cleaning and landscaping services
- Customers and clientele

* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

7 Steps to Smoothly Reopen *(continued)*

3. CHECK FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM

Ensure fire protection system (*smoke detectors, sprinklers*) is in proper working condition. Contact a fire protection contractor if needed.

4. CONSIDER EQUIPMENT/MACHINERY STARTUP

Review equipment/machinery startup plan with all employees. If your facility does not have a startup plan and has equipment/machinery, create one.

5. REPORT DAMAGE TO MANAGEMENT

When employees return, they should inspect their

workspaces, tools, equipment and/or machinery used in their daily routine and report any damage to management.

6. REPORT DAMAGE TO INSURANCE COMPANY

Management should report any damage and/or related expenses to their insurance company.

7. DEBRIEF AND UPDATE REOPENING PLAN

Hold a debrief meeting with all staff to review the reopening. Note successes and failures, compile a log of actions to be taken, and incorporate improvements into reopening plan.

PORTABLE GAS CONTAINER SAFETY TIPS

You may need gasoline at your home or business to operate gas-powered equipment, such as leaf blowers, snow blowers, lawn mowers, weed trimmers and chain saws.

However, if these containers are not handled or stored properly, you are putting yourself at risk for a fire or explosion. Here are some tips for properly handling gasoline containers:

- Use only an approved portable gasoline container. These containers have special seals to prevent leaks and are made of material that is compatible with gasoline (noncompatible materials could lead to a leak or chemical reaction). Many of these

approved containers are red and have an Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or the ASTM International stamp on them.

- At the gas pump, place the container on the ground before filling it. You should never fill a container that is sitting on a truck bed or inside of a vehicle.
- Do not use the gas pump latch. Manually and slowly fill the container. Do not fill the container to the top; there must be space to allow the gas to expand when the temperature increases.
- Store portable gas containers in a well-ventilated area that is free of electrical equipment, flames, or other sources of ignition. The basement is not a suitable storage location if there is a furnace, water heater or clothes dryer. Never smoke around a portable gas container.



If you have any questions or need assistance regarding workplace safety, please contact your independent insurance agent or the Auto-Owners Loss Control HelpLine at 855.586.5388, or send an email to LossControlSupport@aoins.com.

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