



Property Risk Consulting

## Let's get started: Guidance for restarting idled facilities impacted by pandemic

Around the world, many facilities have been idled because of the current pandemic, COVID-19. This guidance is intended for facilities that have been idled for weeks or a few months and have applied basic idle plant measures as outlined in our recent article, [“The protection of unoccupied industrial plants”](#). It does not address the more intensive measures needed to restart a facility that has been mothballed for years.

To get started, facility managers should address three core areas in their planning process: Management Programs, Fire Protection and Production Equipment.

### Management programs

- Where production will be increased past prior levels to make up for lost production, follow the guidance in [“Risk and safety implications when repurposing operations.”](#)
- Train returning or new employees who will need to fill need jobs due to staffing shortages.
- Review contractor procedures and ensure that they understand safety rules especially as they pertain to hot work.
- Ensure that hot work procedures are rigorously enforced if any such work must be done as part of the restart.
- Check domestic water systems using the [WaterWorks system](#)

### Fire protection

- Ensure that fire protection is in full service before restarting operations. Conduct a 2” (50 mm) drain test on any systems that have been shut during the shutdown.
- Report that the systems are back in service through RSVP.
- Double check all valves to be sure that they are in the proper position.
- Top off water tanks, diesel pump fuel tanks, etc.
- Conduct weekly and monthly fire pump runs.
- Alarms should be fully tested if they were not tested at the normal interval during the shutdown. Conduct a spot check regardless.
- Check batteries on fire protection equipment such as fire pumps and fire alarm systems.
- Inspect fire doors especially their tracks for damage.
- Conduct any other unique tests to ensure that fire protections are 100% capable.



## Production equipment

- Perform an inspection on all equipment for potential sources of failure on start up.
- Depending on the length of shutdown and what was done to idle the equipment, a full commissioning restart may be needed. The presence of a manufacturer's representative should also be considered.
- If applicable, remove desiccant material.
- When filling up fluid systems that may be susceptible to corrosion, consider a passivation\* step, suitable for the material being protected.
- If a corrosion Inhibitor or some other protective coating was applied, it may have to be cleaned for the equipment to operate as intended.
- Conduct a maintenance assessment of items that could have deteriorated and need replacing such as gaskets.

## Looking ahead

During these uncertain times, no one can predict the exact timing for when facilities will need to be restarted. However, it's important to plan ahead. Our property risk consulting team is here to help. We can provide insights and guidance to help clients navigate the various challenges these circumstances are presenting.

\* Passivation is a procedure to provide a protective layer on a metal surface existing in a corrosive environment. Passivation is typically achieved by circulating a mild acid mixed with water at elevated temperatures (140 F – 170 F) for a period of time (12 – 24 hours). At the end of the process, the metal surface is resistant to cracking, pitting, scaling and other forms of corrosion. An industrial water chemistry company is able to assist in setting up a passivation procedure for a specific metal surface.

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