



# CONSTRUCTION SITE SAFETY DURING EMERGENCIES

Buildings under construction, alteration, or demolition are facing a new challenge in 2020: How can owners safely prepare and execute demobilization efforts when required by a jurisdiction during COVID-19 or any other emergency? When faced with this type of challenge, the following three critical questions should be considered:

1. What **existing conditions** are currently on-site?
2. What **key requirements** should be considered?
3. How do these buildings properly **resume operations** when cleared to do so?

When navigating these issues, one resource that can help is NFPA 241, *Standard for Safeguarding Construction, Alteration, and Demolition Operations*. **While NFPA 241 is not**

**specifically intended for demobilization efforts**, it provides some time-tested safeguards that owners, jurisdictions, and contractors might find useful to help keep construction sites safer during any phase of work. **Owners and contractors should always check with their authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for specific requirements and final approval.**

## EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

Are any of the existing conditions listed in the table below found on the construction, alteration, or demolition site? If so, NFPA 241 offers provisions and requirements on these topics. The standard can also provide useful guidance for sites that have special considerations such as roofing operations, underground operations, or tall-timber structures.

Existing Condition	Questions to Ask	Where to Look in NFPA 241 (2019 ed.)
Temporary offices and sheds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are these units properly separated from other structures, such as dumpsters or trailers?</li> </ul>	Section 4.2
Waste disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has all waste been properly removed from the site?</li> <li>• If left on the site, where is it located? When will it be removed?</li> </ul>	Section 5.4
Storage of flammable/com-bustible liquids/gases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have these liquids and gases been removed from the site or properly secured?</li> <li>• Does the AHJ have specific requirements for the storage of materials left on-site?</li> </ul>	Section 5.5
Command posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a command post area set up and available for use by the AHJ? What items are found at this location?</li> <li>• Is a key box required?</li> </ul>	7.5.1
Access roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are access roadways clear and unobstructed?</li> <li>• Are these surfaces able to provide access and withstand the requirements of fire department apparatus?</li> </ul>	7.5.3
Standpipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where required, what is the condition of the standpipes on-site?</li> </ul>	Section 7.6



# CONSTRUCTION SITE SAFETY DURING EMERGENCIES *CONTINUED*

## KEY REQUIREMENTS TO CONSIDER

### Fire Safety Program

What should be considered in order to safely demobilize a construction site and keep it secure during a shutdown? One of the most important tools in NFPA 241 is the development of a fire safety program (see 7.1.2). The fire safety program contains eight items that need to be properly planned for and actively addressed by the property owner. Five important items of the fire safety program to consider are as follows:

#### 1. Good housekeeping

- ✓ What is the current status of your site?
- ✓ Are loose combustible materials overflowing from dumpsters, stacked in certain areas, or lying loosely?
- ✓ Is there a timely plan in place to safely remove these items?
- ✓ Has a simple visual inspection been completed?

#### 2. On-site security

- ✓ Is your site adequately protected/secured, including proper fencing?
- ✓ If security is provided, is it clear what the expectations are at off-hours? Ensuring that proper protocols are in place can help limit unwanted entry, property loss, or injury.

#### 3. Fire protection systems

- ✓ What is the status of the fire protection systems on the site as it currently stands?
- ✓ Is access to the water supply valves or fire department connections (FDCs) readily accessible, even when a site is shut down?
- ✓ Are openings within floors, walls, and ceilings properly protected for both fire and safety? Knowing the status of these systems—as well as any impairments—is a crucial protection step that should not be ignored.

#### 4. Rapid communication

- ✓ Who is on-site?
- ✓ Who is not on-site?
- ✓ Is there a good communication plan in place that

includes up-to-date contact information to share with relevant stakeholders?

#### 5. Protection of existing structures

- ✓ In the efforts to prepare another site, have any structures, roadways, or neighbors potentially been compromised?
- ✓ Are the site borders clearly marked to maintain access for the fire department?

### Fire Prevention Program Manager

Often, the owner will designate a representative, known as the **fire prevention program manager** (FPPM) to carry out the fire safety program to completion (see Section 7.2). The FPPM is responsible for several items that aid in this endeavor. Three important tasks for the FPPM to consider include:

#### 1. Fire protection devices

- ✓ Has the FPPM ensured that enough devices—such as fire extinguishers—are on-site?
- ✓ Have the workers that remained on-site been trained to properly use these devices?
- ✓ Have these devices been properly maintained and serviced accordingly?

#### 2. Inspections

- ✓ The FPPM is responsible for inspections of the site, as determined by the AHJ. How is the site still being inspected?
- ✓ Who is performing the inspection?
- ✓ Are records being maintained?
- ✓ How are issues being communicated, and to whom?

#### 3. Impairments

- ✓ Are there any impairments to any fire protection/fire alarm systems?
- ✓ If so, what is the plan to address the impairment(s)? The FPPM should be aware of such impairments and work with the proper parties to actively address any issues.



# CONSTRUCTION SITE SAFETY DURING EMERGENCIES *CONTINUED*

## RESUME OPERATIONS

When the jurisdiction clears a project to restart construction, alteration, or demolition operations, the **first step should be to consult with the local AHJ for specific requirements.** Before resuming operations, owners may want to consider the following three key action items:

1. Develop a fire safety program
2. Appoint a fire prevention program manager to execute the fire safety program
3. Establish communications with their local fire department regarding a prefire plan

It is important to note that AHJs are often seen as only building and fire officials. However, be sure to determine if additional AHJs or other parties need to be considered for the project. These may include, but should not be limited to, specific federal, state, and local authorities, as well as certain insurance providers. Sharing of pertinent information with all relevant parties should be established and continued for the duration of the project.

## What You Should Know

**Everyone has a role to play to help keep construction sites safe:**



As a code official, you must know and enforce the requirements of NFPA 241.



As a building owner, facility manager, or fire prevention program manager, you must have a fire safety program.



As a contractor or worker on a job site, you must follow the fire safety program.

➤ **BECOME AN NFPA MEMBER**  
FOR MORE OF THESE RESOURCES

## Next Steps You Can Take

Keep up with the latest news and information with these resources:

- ▶ Latest news: [nfpa.org/coronavirus](https://nfpa.org/coronavirus)
- ▶ Access the standard: [nfpa.org/241](https://nfpa.org/241)
- ▶ Questions?: [nfpa.org/technicalquestions](https://nfpa.org/technicalquestions)
- ▶ Data: [nfpa.org/constructionfires](https://nfpa.org/constructionfires)
- ▶ Discussion: [nfpa.org/xchange](https://nfpa.org/xchange)
- ▶ Training: <https://catalog.nfpa.org/241training>



IT'S A BIG WORLD.  
LET'S PROTECT IT TOGETHER.®

This material contains some basic information about NFPA 241, *Standard for Safeguarding Construction, Alteration, and Demolition Operations*. It identifies some of the requirements in these documents as of the date of publication. This material is not the official position of any NFPA Technical Committee on any referenced topic which is represented solely by the NFPA documents on such topic in their entirety. For free access to the complete and most current version of all NFPA documents, please go to [nfpa.org/docinfo](https://nfpa.org/docinfo). While every effort has been made to achieve a work of high quality, neither the NFPA nor the contributors to this material guarantee the accuracy or completeness of or assume any liability in connection with this information. Neither the NFPA nor the contributors shall be liable for any personal injury, property, or other damages of any nature whatsoever, whether special, indirect, consequential, or compensatory, directly or indirectly resulting from the publication, use of, or reliance upon this material. Neither the NFPA nor the contributors are attempting to render engineering or other professional services. If such services are required, the assistance of a professional should be sought.

© 2020 National Fire Protection Association / April 2020