

Civil unrest can create challenging situations for businesses and employees alike. This guide offers practical steps employers can take to support their workforce and maintain a safe and inclusive environment.

Prioritising Employee Safety

Workplace Security:

- ✓ Conduct a risk assessment to identify potential threats.
- ✓ Consider adjusting operating hours or temporarily closing if safety is compromised.
- ✓ Implement or review security measures (e.g., controlled access, evacuation plans).

Safe Commute:

- ✓ Offer flexible work arrangements (e.g., remote work, staggered hours) to minimise travel during periods of unrest.
- ✓ Consider providing safe transportation options (e.g., travel reimbursements, carshare, designated parking).

Open Communication:

- ✓ Keep employees informed about safety measures and developments through regular updates.
- ✓ Establish clear communication channels for employees to report concerns or seek assistance.

Providing Extra Support to Vulnerable Employees

Individualised Risk Assessment:

- ✓ Proactively identify employees who might be at higher risk due to their background, beliefs, or commute.
- ✓ Develop personalised safety plans in collaboration with these employees, considering factors like remote work or adjusted duties.

Mental Health Resources:

- ✓ Encourage the use of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and mental health resources.
- ✓ Train managers and Mental Health First Aiders to recognise and support employees experiencing stress, anxiety, or trauma.

Addressing Employee Involvement in Civil Unrest

Thorough & Confidential Investigations:

- ✓ Adhere to company investigation procedures to ensure any allegations of employee involvement are addressed fairly and thoroughly.
- ✓ Maintain strict confidentiality throughout the process and limit information sharing.

Legal & Disciplinary Action:

- ✓ Consult with legal counsel to understand legal obligations and ensure compliance with employment and criminal law.
- ✓ Apply company disciplinary policies consistently and fairly.
- ✓ If an employee's presence at work poses a safety risk, consider suspension with full pay while investigations are ongoing.

Fostering a Unified and Inclusive Workplace

Reinforce Company Values:

- ✓ Clearly reiterate the company's commitment to inclusivity, safety, and respect for all employees.
- ✓ Reinforce these values through internal communications, actions, and leadership behaviours

Open Dialogue & Conflict Resolution:

- ✓ Create safe spaces for employees to voice concerns and engage in open dialogue.
- ✓ Address any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or intolerance swiftly and effectively.

Supporting Affected Employees:

- ✓ Provide support to employees returning to work after being involved in or affected by civil unrest.
- ✓ Offer counselling services and phased return-to-work plans to facilitate smooth reintegration.

Ensuring Business Continuity

Contingency Planning:

- ✓ Develop and regularly review business continuity plans that account for scenarios like remote work, temporary closures, or alternative work arrangements.
- ✓ Ensure all employees understand the plans and their roles.

Adapt and Monitor:

- ✓ Stay informed about the situation through reliable sources and remain flexible in adjusting plans as needed.
- ✓ Continuous monitoring and adaptation are key to ensuring employee safety and ongoing business operations.

The Value of HR Professionals

HR professionals play a vital role in guiding organisations through challenging times, such as periods of civil unrest. They can provide:

- **Expertise & Guidance:** Offering up-to-date advice on legal compliance, best practices, and policy development.
- **Mediation & Conflict Resolution:** Facilitating constructive conversations and resolving workplace conflicts fairly.
- **Tailored Support:** Providing personalised support to vulnerable employees, including safety planning and access to resources.
- **Effective Communication:** Developing and implementing clear communication strategies to keep employees informed and engaged.
- **Training & Development:** Equipping managers and employees with the skills to navigate challenging situations and foster an inclusive work environment.
- **Business Continuity Support:** Assisting with the development, implementation, and adaptation of robust business continuity plans.

Conclusion

By prioritising employee safety, offering comprehensive support, addressing concerns transparently, and fostering an inclusive environment, businesses can navigate periods of civil unrest effectively. HR professionals are essential in guiding these efforts and building a resilient and unified workforce.