

Downstream Energy Reduced Personnel Availability Guidance

Energy Risk Engineering

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Operation, maintenance, inspection and emergency response protocols or contingency plans may assume response from key individuals, teams or specialist contractors.

The Coronavirus pandemic may result in reduced personnel availability due to social isolation protocols, illness or care commitments. Reduced personnel availability may result in enhanced risk to operations, inability to maintain normal activities, delay in restarting operations or ineffective response to subsequent incidents.

It is recommended that clients review existing procedures and service arrangements to identify potential reduced personnel exposures. Where possible risk assessment to develop mitigation plans for reduced personnel availability should be implemented.

Managing the risks

It is recognized that personnel availability will vary as the situation develops.

The following are recommended to be considered in reduced personnel planning:

- Shift teams of adequate size and competence
- Site security and emergency response
- Contingency plans, including key/specialist personnel exposures
- Safety Critical Equipment inspection and maintenance
- Critical maintenance, mechanical integrity inspections and contract services
- Statutory maintenance and turnarounds

Reduced personnel availability may expose safe operations, delay business restart or impair emergency response

Operation, Inspection and Maintenance

- Evaluate minimum shift staffing for safe operations.
- Evaluate capability and resilience available for safety critical equipment maintenance, testing and inspections.
- Review the resilience of contract service providers including their contingency planning. Sole providers of specialist capabilities should be specifically identified.
- Review requirements for statutory maintenance and mechanical integrity inspection (e.g. pipework, pressure vessels, heaters, pressure relief devices, rotating machinery etc.).
- Risk assess and document any deferral ensuring mitigations are in place.

Response Planning

- Document requirements for minimum staffing for shift operations, maintenance, inspection, technical management for continued production and define staffing thresholds for suspending production.
- Define staffing levels for temporary shutdowns and mothballed status and restarting operations. The LMA 9142 Mothballing and Recommissioning Questionnaire is referenced for guidance.
- Ensure that emergency response plans are resilient to reduced personnel availability.
- Identify key staff exposures, including IT staff responsible for supporting remote working.

Risk Management Protocols

- ✓ Key staff resilience plans should be reviewed and, if needed, additional socially isolated back-ups identified. Define staffing thresholds for suspending production.
- ✓ Protective systems should continue to be fully functional. Maintenance of protective equipment should only be conducted by appropriately qualified specialists. Where specialist capability is scarce, critical maintenance should be prioritized based upon documented risk assessment (e.g. emergency shutdown equipment over internal metering).
- ✓ Where services are supported by sole contractors the availability of alternative providers should be established or the contingency plans of the sole contractors approved.
- ✓ Routine maintenance should consider the possibility of prolonged shutdown and the requirements for recommissioning.
- ✓ Contingency options for deferred statutory maintenance should be reviewed with the relevant regulating authority, certifying body and/or insurer.
- ✓ Additional keyholders or call-out responders should be identified and trained.
- ✓ Emergency response, contingency and business continuity plans should have alternate staff designated and trained for all key roles. It is recommended that as far as possible alternate staff are isolated from each other.
- ✓ Ensure plans are resilient to changes of occupancy, prolonged outage and recommissioning requirements.

Further Guidance

- Assessing the Safety of staffing arrangements for process operations in the chemical and allied industries ([HSE 348/2001](#))
- Pandemic Planning guide – [API Guidance Document 1180](#)

Contact Us

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