

### **The Real Estate Shutdown and Restart Manager**

#### **What to Do When a Space Has to Be Temporarily Decommissioned? And What to Be Aware of When Restarting Operations**

The Coronavirus pandemic is having a huge impact on the German economy. One side effect of social distancing and the restrictions on movement is empty, unused properties. However, the operating costs for office buildings, manufacturing plants, restaurants and retail outlets still have to be paid. Drees & Sommer, a planning and consulting company based in the German city of Stuttgart that specializes in construction and real estate, advises public-sector and private companies on temporary shutdowns and also on recommissioning – with checklists covering cleaning and hygiene, operation and facility management, security and fire prevention, building and systems technology, and workstations.

Stuttgart, Germany, April 14, 2020. When companies ask their employees to work from home, and retailers are forced to close their businesses, they leave spaces or even entire buildings empty. Yet, for the most part, they still have to pay the costs of operating the buildings. This can be an additional burden for users of real estate in the current situation. Turn off the lights, close the door, and reduce costs? In most cases this is not how it works.

#### **Checklists Serve as Initial Guide**

Real estate consulting company Drees & Sommer has now compiled and published a list of the activities that are crucial for the temporary shutdown and recommissioning of manufacturing plants, hotels, corporate real estate, and office, retail and catering space. The publication includes checklists with tips about organization, processes, communication, cleaning and hygiene, operation and facility management, security and fire prevention, building and systems technology, and workstations.

Thomas Häusser, Partner at Drees & Sommer SE, commented: ‘Not only does the closure and decommissioning of the space or building have to be precisely planned and executed – the entire related infrastructure has to be shut down and later restarted in a structured way.’

### **Ensuring the Operator Takes Responsibility**

In many cases, the Drees & Sommer Partner suggests, users of spaces, or their managers, are not aware of the extent of their responsibility as operators in the various areas of the company. Important duties relating to the management of vacant space are forgotten, he claims, thus giving rise to unnecessary costs and even inadvertently exposing them to operational risks. Much inspection and maintenance work – for instance, on air conditioning systems, fire protection equipment, elevators or emergency lighting, should not be postponed except in limited circumstances and should also only be carried out by qualified staff with proven expertise.

### **Making Appointments in Good Time**

Thomas Häusser's team colleague Bernd Fisel, Associate Partner at Drees & Sommer SE, warned: 'In air conditioning systems and the drinking water supply network, water left standing in pipes poses by far the greatest risk. The most important thing is to prevent germs and bacteria from building up and reproducing, including the dreaded legionella.' Strategies are also needed for the period following the Coronavirus restrictions, he added: 'Drinking water systems, ventilation systems and air conditioning systems using humidifiers should be thoroughly inspected. It is also important for companies to talk to external service providers in good time to ensure that they are available when the facility reopens. It is already obvious that they will be overloaded with work after this period.'

### **Avoiding Damage to Systems**

When systems are being restarted, they will need to be monitored to avoid damage and peaks in demand. The Associate Partner commented: 'Ultimately, precautions will also have to be taken to ensure quick and flexible reactivation of the properties affected, at the same time as complying with legal provisions.' He pointed out that this applies especially to systems with particular hygiene requirements, such as drinking water and ventilation systems, open cooling towers, and systems posing a particular danger to building users, the environment or third parties. He added: 'It is advisable to carry out a comprehensive inspection of all systems to eliminate hazards – unless facilities have been inspected and maintained by qualified staff throughout the shutdown.'

**Shutdown and Restart Managers Now Providing Advice to Clients Online**

In short, the reopening and recommissioning should be planned in good time to allow the infrastructure of the building to be recovered or restarted. In addition to the checklists, Drees & Sommer offers online consulting on all these important steps in relation to temporary closures. Drees & Sommer is currently providing support to some of its clients in industry and the insurance sector to shut down individual buildings not currently in use, as well as to negotiate with existing facility management service providers, make arrangements for interim management, and suspend construction projects.

For more information, please visit:

[https://www.dreso.com/fileadmin/Aktuelles/en\\_Shutdown\\_Gebaeudesicherheit.pdf](https://www.dreso.com/fileadmin/Aktuelles/en_Shutdown_Gebaeudesicherheit.pdf)

Activities (non-exhaustive list)	Cycle
Locking of all fire protection doors (e.g. blocked fire protection doors)	at decommissioning
Complete emptying and cleaning of humidifiers in air conditioning systems (depending on construction type)	at decommissioning
Complete emptying and cleaning of cooling towers (depending on construction type)	at decommissioning
Regular inspection of fire extinguisher systems (in addition to regular maintenance)	e.g. daily
Flushing of drinking water pipes according to VDI 6023	every 3 days
Regular inspection of emergency lighting (in addition to regular maintenance)	e.g. weekly (depending on type of equipment)
Regular inspection of elevator systems (in addition to regular maintenance)	e.g. weekly (depending on type of equipment)
Regular inspection rounds to assess condition (early identification of leaks, damage etc.)	at least once a week
Regular checking of functioning of wastewater lifting plants (prevention of water damage)	at least once a month
Maintenance/inspection of fire detection systems	e.g. at annual or quarterly intervals

Source: Drees & Sommer

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