



Coronavirus Response

Buildings and Businesses Premises that are closed in order to comply with Local, Regional or National Covid regulations

The UK Government has announced a new lockdown in England from Thursday 5 November to Wednesday 2 December that will replace the current pattern of local and regional regulations. At the same time Scotland is in the process of introducing a regionalised approach.

These various regulations mean that a variety of non-essential businesses (such as retailers or leisure businesses) may be required to close or to further extend their current closure causing a short-term substantial increase in empty buildings.

However, please remember that our standard policies* have an empty** buildings definition of 30 days. That is to say that provided the building isn't empty for longer than 30 days, it's not regarded as empty by the terms and conditions of the policy. In many instances this existing definition should be enough to cover the period of any compulsory lockdown and in these circumstances our customers don't need to notify us that the building is empty and no additional risk management requirements or cover changes are required.

However, we're aware that as a result of a combination of Local, Regional and National lockdowns some buildings may have been empty before 2 November. In these instances, we we'd ask that our customers notify us in good time before the 30-day limit is reached. This will enable us to advise of any additional requirements needed to protect property. Please note that contractors, including our security specialist preferred supplier; First Response Group, can continue to operate.





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Businesses and Buildings closed under previous lockdowns

Buildings that have previously been closed but that have now reopened for at least seven consecutive working days will no longer be considered as empty and if they are subsequently closed due to government lockdown a fresh 30-day definition is provided.

Businesses and Buildings that are partially open for business

Buildings which are partially open – such as a restaurant providing a take-way service – will not be considered as empty under the terms of the policy.

Increases in Premiums for empty Buildings to reflect the increased risk

It's often the case that additional premiums are charged to reflect the increased risk of an empty building, however we're pleased to confirm that we won't be charging any additional premium for customers who have buildings which are closed beyond the 30 days provided by the policy solely due to government lockdown.

Where buildings are empty for reasons unrelated to government lockdowns, our standard empty buildings approach will continue to apply. Similarly, buildings which have closed permanently and won't be reopening in their current form, shall continue to follow our standard empty buildings approach.

Throughout any period where a building is empty, we recommend:

1. The building is inspected internally and externally at least once per week.
2. That refuse, waste and any mail is regularly removed from the building.
3. The building is fully secured using all protective locking devices available, setting any alarms and activating any CCTV available.
4. Ensure that gas and electricity supplies are turned-off at the mains – except any electricity required to maintain alarms or to run computer servers etc whilst working from home.
5. Any empty building or empty part of the building has its water supply isolated at the mains. For extended empty periods that water and heating systems are fully drained-down.

If for any reason it's not possible to carry out these precautions we'd recommend that you contact our Underwriters or Business Resilience team for alternative advice on how you can protect your premises (such as the use of Frost Stats to help protect against freezing if it's not possible turn off water supplies).

We'll continue to review the emerging situation, and should the lockdown exceed the proposed 30 days we'll update our approach.

We remain here to support our customers throughout these challenging times. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact your local AXA office or representative.

* In some instances, our standard policies may have been amended and broker and scheme policy wordings will vary, please check your policy for the exact empty buildings definition.

** Empty is used generically in this document. In your policy it may be referred to as: empty, unoccupied, vacant or void.