



TPOP + FMI
WEBINAR FIELD GUIDE

MANAGING CIVIL UNREST:

PREPARING FOR DISRUPTION BEFORE IT REACHES YOUR FRONT DOOR

Keeping Calm When the Streets Get Loud —
practical insights and frameworks for food
retailers navigating today's disruption risks.



RECOGNIZE EARLY

Spot developing risk while you still
have options, not after conditions
deteriorate.



DECIDE WITH A FRAMEWORK

Know in advance who decides, and
what moves a location between
open, modified, and closed.



PROTECT AND RECOVER

Keep people safe, meet your
obligations, and get the business
back on its feet.



PRACTICAL INSIGHTS. STRONGER DECISIONS. SAFER TEAMS.

Who's Behind This Guide

This field guide grew out of a live webinar presented by The Power of Preparedness (TPOP) and hosted by FMI — The Food Industry Association, featuring Cavasin Risk Advisory. Together they approach civil unrest from three complementary angles: industry perspective, operational security leadership, and frontline preparedness training.

■ The Power of Preparedness (TPOP)

A workplace violence prevention training company serving food service, retail, healthcare, manufacturing, and hospitality. Its scenario-based, micro-lesson courses are built with security expert faculty and designed for frontline teams: customizable to your brand, LMS-agnostic, and engaging without scare tactics. The aim throughout is practical readiness that builds confidence, not fear.

thepowerofpreparedness.com

■ FMI — The Food Industry Association

The Food Industry Association serves food retailers, wholesalers, and product suppliers, from independent grocers to national chains. It convenes the asset protection, risk, safety, and operations communities, develops crisis-management guidance and industry research, and gives practitioners a forum to share what actually works in real operating environments.

fmi.org

■ Cavasin Risk Advisory

Helping businesses mitigate risks, investigate losses, and prepare for what matters most. The practice spans physical security risk assessments, loss investigations, organizational assessment and advisory, workplace violence prevention strategy, crisis management planning and response, and training — identifying vulnerabilities before they are exploited and building readiness that holds up under pressure.

cavasinriskadvisory.com

THE PANEL



Tom Cosgrove

Director, Industry Relations, FMI — Session Host

Convenes FMI's asset protection, risk, and safety communities, connecting food retailers across the industry on the operational challenges they share.



Damon Cavasin

President & CEO, Cavasin Risk Advisory

A veteran asset protection and corporate security leader with decades of retail experience, he advises organizations on security risk, workplace violence prevention, and crisis management planning and response.



Dan Stechow

Founder, President & CEO, TPOP

Works at the intersection of creativity, technology, and human behavior. After founding multiple digital companies, he built TPOP on one belief: education, creativity, and technology can change behavior at scale.

DISCLAIMER

This field guide is provided for general informational and educational purposes only and does not constitute legal, security, or professional advice. It summarizes a live panel discussion and reflects the views of the individual panelists, not necessarily those of their organizations. Regulatory and legal requirements vary by jurisdiction; organizations should consult qualified counsel and safety professionals when developing civil unrest, workplace violence, and business continuity policies.

The Painful Costs of Civil Unrest

Aggregate and downstream costs often go unmeasured.

Civil unrest reaches the bottom line of every organization it touches, and it does not have to arrive at your door to do so. Beyond the immediate harm, it drives turnover, lost sales, manager distraction, and legal exposure, and it can damage a brand's reputation long after conditions return to normal. These costs are routinely underreported because organizations track only the direct, visible expenses rather than the aggregate, downstream effects.



Cost Category	Business Impact
Lost Sales & Closures	Unplanned closures cost more than planned ones, and reopening is rarely immediate.
Employee Turnover	Staff who do not feel protected leave, and replacing them costs more than preparing them.
Lost Productivity	Disruption, distraction, and fear reduce output across whole teams before and after an event.
Manager Distraction	Incidents pull leadership attention away from operations for extended periods.
Legal & Liability Risk	Inconsistent or undocumented decisions increase exposure when events are reviewed later.
Insurance Pressure	Claims drive premium increases that compound over time.
Lost Customers & Reputation	Publicized incidents damage customer trust and partner relationships.

THE POINT

Every hour of delay removes choices. The most expensive decisions during civil unrest are the ones made too late.

PART 1

The Industry Perspective

Civil unrest has become a business continuity issue, not simply a security concern. What retailers are seeing, and why preparation now sits with leadership.

Why This Conversation Matters Now

Disruption has moved from an occasional security problem to a standing business risk.



■ **Retailers face a volatile operating environment**

Conditions change faster than they used to.

■ **Emergency preparedness is becoming a competitive advantage**

Readiness is now a differentiator.

■ **Disruptions affect organizations of every size**

Scale is no protection.

■ **Industry collaboration has never been more important**

Peers see it before you do.

Over the past several years, retailers, grocers, and restaurants have experienced an increase in operational disruptions driven by demonstrations, politically charged events, organized retail crime, and rapidly changing community conditions. These events affect far more than security; they influence operations, staffing, customer confidence, and brand reputation. The organizations that fare best are the ones that treated preparation as a leadership responsibility before they needed it.

We no longer have the luxury of sitting back and letting things unfold. The decisions made in the first few hours often shape the outcome.

— Tom Cosgrove, FMI

What We're Hearing From Retailers

Preparedness has become a recurring topic among industry leaders.

■ **Greater concern for employee safety**

People come first.

■ **More cross-functional planning**

Silos are breaking down.

■ **Increased focus on business continuity**

Staying operational matters.

■ **Demand for practical guidance**

Frameworks over theory.

Across the industry, leaders are asking the same questions. How do we protect our people while continuing to serve our communities? When should operations change, and who should make that call? Organizations are looking for practical frameworks that help them prepare before they are forced to respond.

Today's Disruptions Are Different

Modern disruptions evolve faster and involve more stakeholders than ever before.



- **Social media accelerates events**
Crowds form and move online first.
- **Misinformation spreads rapidly**
False claims travel faster than facts.
- **Operational impacts develop quickly**
Traffic and staffing feel it early.
- **Leadership must make decisions sooner**
The window has compressed.

Organizations no longer have the luxury of waiting for complete information before taking action. Events can develop quickly, public perception changes rapidly, and decisions made during the first few hours often shape the outcome. That reality requires stronger planning and better coordination across the organization.

Around 2013 they figured out that if you get people to fight about topics, they are going to interact more with the platforms. That is when social media took a turn. It gets people into the me-versus-them club.

— Dan Stechow, TPOP

Preparation Is a Leadership Responsibility

Effective preparation requires alignment across the entire organization.



- **Security cannot prepare in a silo**
Organizational support is a requirement for success.
- **Operations must be engaged**
They run the locations.
- **HR, Legal, and Communications play critical roles**
People, exposure, and message.
- **Executive leadership sets the direction**
The biggest calls live here.

Managing civil unrest is not the responsibility of a single department. Success depends on Security, Asset Protection, Operations, HR, Legal, Communications, and executive leadership working from a common playbook. Organizations that establish those relationships before an event respond far more effectively when conditions begin to change.

Throughout all of this it comes back to the same three things: protecting people, property, and your reputation.

— Tom Cosgrove, FMI

Today's Objective

Practical strategies for preparing before disruption reaches your front door.

- **Recognize developing risks**

See it while it is still forming.

- **Build practical decision frameworks**

Decide from criteria.

- **Preserve operational options**

Keep choices open.

- **Improve organizational readiness**

Train, exercise, repeat.

The goal is not to predict the next disruption, but to ensure your organization is better prepared when it occurs.

The FMI Civil Unrest Guide

A phase-by-phase companion, with the operational detail this guide does not carry.



- **Develop a simple and flexible plan**

Chain of command, emergency numbers, and monitoring.

- **Prepare your stores**

Securing the building, equipment, cash, and records.

- **Respond**

What to do as an event reaches the location.

- **Recover**

Reopening, claims, and food-safety checks.

- **Store closing checklist**

A single page to work through under pressure.

FMI's Crisis Management Guide on civil unrest (October 2024) is the operational companion to this field guide. Where this guide focuses on the leadership decisions and the culture that carry them through an organization, the FMI guide gets specific: pre-assigning a crisis team leader and an alternate, obtaining direct-line numbers for police rather than relying on 911, securing anything that could become a projectile, protecting cash and vital records, and a store closing checklist you can work straight down. Use the FMI guide to build the plan; use this one to make the decisions, train the people, and keep the plan alive between events.

TWO THINGS WORTH DOING THIS WEEK

Obtain direct-line numbers for key law enforcement personnel, because 911 will be saturated during an event. And enlist your staff in a see-something-say-something campaign — you cannot monitor every platform, but your associates are already on them.

PART 2

Understanding Today's Landscape

Disruption is a progression, not an event. Most of it begins long before it becomes visible at your location — which is exactly where the opportunity lies.

Civil Unrest Doesn't Start With a Protest

Most disruptions begin long before they become visible at your location.



- **Community tensions often develop first**
The conditions build quietly.
- **Social media accelerates awareness**
Attention gathers before people do.
- **Small events can quickly escalate**
Scale changes fast.
- **Organizations have time to prepare**
That time is the asset.

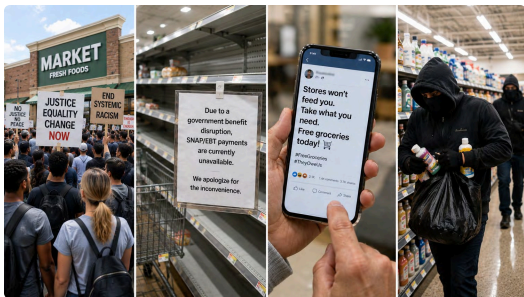
One of the biggest misconceptions is that civil unrest begins when demonstrators arrive at your front door. In reality, most events evolve over hours or days through online activity, community issues, and changing local conditions. Leaders who recognize those early indicators preserve valuable time to prepare.

Civil unrest can happen quickly, but ninety percent of the time you have a little bit of advance knowledge. You are going to see people start to gather, or you are going to hear about it on social media.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

What's Driving Today's Disruptions?

Modern civil unrest is fueled by a variety of social, political, and economic factors.



- **Politically charged events**
Emotion runs high and public.
- **Public assistance disruptions**
Benefit interruptions spike demand and frustration.
- **Viral misinformation**
A false post can move a crowd in minutes.
- **Organized criminal activity**
Confusion and thin staffing become cover.

Today's disruptions rarely have a single cause. Political events, economic uncertainty, social media, organized retail crime, and local community issues can all contribute to rapidly changing conditions. Recent public assistance disruptions, and the rapid spread of social posts encouraging people to simply take groceries, showed how quickly uncertainty can evolve into a safety concern.

From Local Incident to Operational Impact

Events occurring miles away can quickly affect your operations.



- **Employees become concerned**
Worry arrives before the crowd.
- **Customers change shopping behavior**
Demand surges or vanishes.
- **Traffic patterns shift**
Access and delivery routes close.
- **Resources become strained**
Staffing and supply feel it.

A demonstration does not have to occur outside your building to affect your business. Changes in traffic, staffing, customer demand, or community perception can create significant operational challenges. Prepared organizations monitor the broader environment, not just their own parking lot.

The food retail outlet is one of the most basic pillars of society. We all gather here. These organizations have to stay open.

— Dan Stechow, TPOP

What Should Leaders Be Watching?

A few key indicators often provide the earliest warning that conditions are changing.



- **Local intelligence and law enforcement updates**
The most credible early source.
- **Community and social media activity**
Where calls to action surface.
- **Employee observations**
The people closest to the floor.
- **Operational disruptions and anomalies**
Odd patterns are data.

Leaders do not need dozens of intelligence sources to improve preparedness. Monitoring a handful of reliable indicators often provides enough information to begin internal discussions and contingency planning. The objective is awareness that supports better decisions, not information overload.

SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

A simple, trusted way for employees to flag what they notice is often the fastest warning system a location has. Make reporting easy, confirm it was received, and never treat a good-faith report as an overreaction.

The Recognition Window

Early recognition provides leaders with their greatest operational advantage.



■ **Conditions change progressively**

Escalation is rarely instant.

■ **Time creates better decisions**

Calm beats urgent.

■ **Warning signs appear early**

There is something to notice.

■ **Preparation preserves options**

Choices are the asset.

Every developing event creates a window between the first observable indicators and the point where leaders begin losing operational flexibility. Within that window, leaders can adjust staffing, coordinate with security, modify operations, or prepare to close on their own terms. Once it closes, the same decisions get made under pressure with far less control. The goal is not to predict exactly what will happen, but to recognize when conditions justify additional planning.

The recognition window is the space between awareness and when things get really difficult. When everything is breaking loose, decisions are few and far between. It becomes more about managing the impact.

— Dan Stechow, TPOP

PART 3

Building Your Playbook

The best decisions are made before the event, not during it. Decide who decides, define what moves a location between operating states, and write it down while everyone is calm.

Define Roles Before the Event

Everyone should know their responsibilities before an incident occurs.



- **AP / LP / Security**
Assess threat and coordinate protection.
- **Operations**
Run the location and its people.
- **Human Resources**
Employee obligations and support.
- **Legal and Communications**
Exposure and the message.

Civil unrest quickly becomes a cross-functional challenge, so the playbook starts with people rather than procedures. Beyond the core functions, civil unrest often pulls in facilities, maintenance, and real estate, given the possibility of boarding up windows. Figuring out who needs to be involved is the first step.

This does not need to be a complicated or complex process. Keep it simple, and you do not have to do it on your own. There are a lot of other leaders within your organization who can help.

— Damon Cvasin, Cvasin Risk Advisory

Early Preparation Creates Operational Options

The earlier organizations prepare, the more flexibility they retain.



- **Review contingency plans**
Know what you already have.
- **Coordinate internal stakeholders**
Get the functions talking.
- **Prepare operational alternatives**
Have a middle gear ready.
- **Communicate before conditions deteriorate**
Silence invites rumor.

Prepared organizations rarely make perfect decisions, but they consistently make better-informed ones. Early planning gives leadership the opportunity to coordinate resources, evaluate alternatives, and communicate expectations before decisions become urgent. That preparation is what turns the recognition window into an operational advantage rather than a missed opportunity.

Make Decisions Proactively

The best decisions are made before the event, not during it.



- **Establish decision criteria**
Agree on thresholds early.
- **Define leadership roles**
Name who can act.
- **Develop response options**
Pre-build the choices.
- **Plan before emotions take over**
Calm time is planning time.

Organizations often find themselves making high-consequence decisions with incomplete information and limited time. A written playbook provides leaders with a structured framework before pressure begins to build. Preparation reduces uncertainty and improves consistency across the organization, so that when conditions change the question is which pre-agreed option applies, not what to do next.

What Should Trigger a Decision?

Objective criteria improve consistency and reduce hesitation.



- **Credible intelligence**
Verified, not rumored.
- **Proximity of demonstrations**
Distance and direction matter.
- **Threats to employees or facilities**
A direct escalation trigger.
- **Law enforcement guidance**
Defer to those with the picture.

Organizations should avoid making decisions based solely on emotion or public pressure. Instead, identify the operational conditions that will trigger additional security measures, modified operations, or temporary closure. Reaching out to law enforcement early is part of this: whether the event is permitted, what their experience with the organizers has been, and how much velocity it is gathering online all inform the call.

What you are looking for at the end of the day is whether there is going to be any violence. That will be the trigger point for an operational change.

— **Damon Cavasin, Cavasin Risk Advisory**

Build Your Decision Tree

Define operational responses before they're needed.



■ **Continue normal operations**

Monitor and stay ready.

■ **Restrict access**

Control who comes in.

■ **Modify operations**

Reduce exposure, keep serving.

■ **Temporarily close locations**

On your terms, not forced.

Not every situation requires the same response. Decision trees help leadership evaluate conditions objectively and determine the most appropriate operational posture. Each state should have clear conditions for entering and leaving it, written down and shared in advance. Complexity fails under stress; simplicity is what makes the framework usable when conditions are chaotic.

It does not need to be the detailed manual. It needs to be more like the easy setup process you get when you buy a new electronic device — with the detail available if you want to dig into it.

— **Damon Cavin**, Cavin Risk Advisory

Communication Is Part of the Response

Clear communication supports confident decision-making.



- **Internal leadership updates**
One source of truth.
- **Employee communications**
Tell them before they ask.
- **Customer messaging**
Short, neutral, safety-focused.
- **External stakeholder coordination**
Partners and responders.

Communication should never become an afterthought. Employees, customers, and business partners all require timely, accurate information as conditions evolve. A named information owner and a set update cadence, maintained even when little has changed, prevent the vacuum that rumor fills. Preparing message templates in advance allows organizations to respond quickly while staying consistent.

Tabletop Exercises Reveal Gaps

Practice your plan before you need to execute it.



- **Test decision-making**
Walk the tree under pressure.
- **Clarify responsibilities**
Find the unowned tasks.
- **Identify weaknesses**
Better found in practice.
- **Improve coordination**
Build the working relationships.

The first time leadership works through a civil unrest scenario should not be during an actual event. Tabletop exercises help organizations identify gaps, validate assumptions, and strengthen coordination across departments. These do not have to be complicated scenarios.

Small improvements made during those tabletop exercises often prevent a lot of problems from happening during a real incident.

— **Damon Cavasin, Cavasin Risk Advisory**

Culture and Training Make It Stick

Best practices spread through the organization only when they are trained and reinforced.



- **Leadership sets the tone and the expectation**
It starts at the top.
- **Every role should know its part before an event**
Specific, not general.
- **Reinforcement turns knowledge into habit**
Repetition builds instinct.
- **Consistency across locations depends on it**
One standard, everywhere.

Making best practices stick is less about the document itself and more about repetition and reinforcement. Leaders set the tone, managers turn expectations into routine through regular practice, and a single standard applied across every location keeps the response consistent.

The written plan is not going to change behavior on its own. Culture and training are what move it from a playbook into daily operations. Without that investment, the strongest playbook in the world is just going to stay on the shelf.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

Online, In-Person, or Both?

Each approach has a role; the right mix depends on your operation.



- **Online scales core knowledge quickly and consistently**
Ideal across many locations.
- **In-person builds judgment through discussion and practice**
Depth and nuance.
- **Tabletop exercises pressure-test decisions and roles**
Where gaps surface.
- **A blended approach usually delivers the most durable results**
Consistency plus depth.

There is no single right way to train, and the best mix depends on your workforce, footprint, and turnover. Online learning standardizes knowledge across many locations and supports onboarding and refreshers, while in-person sessions and tabletops build the coordination and judgment that decisions under pressure require.

Most organizations, in my experience, find a combination — online for consistency and face-to-face for depth — is the most practical and durable approach.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

What Training Looks Like Under Pressure

When something happens, people fall back on what they have practiced.

During the session, Damon Cvasin described managing an active assailant incident. He raised it to make a specific point about training, and it is the clearest answer in this guide to the question of whether the investment is worth making. Reviewing the video afterward showed something consistent about how people behave in those moments: nobody walks to a communications board to consult a document. They react — and what they react with is whatever they were taught.

Associates grabbed customers, headed out emergency exits, and hid behind aisles and things that could block the shooter's view. That is pure training right there.

— Damon Cvasin, Cvasin Risk Advisory

There is a second reason it matters. If a serious incident results in injury, OSHA investigators may interview associates and others present about what happened, how they reacted and what plans were in place. The answer you want from your people is that they had training on this, that they recall it, and that they see refreshers regularly. That is what turns a procedure into something closer to muscle memory.

I think you will find that folks, ninety-nine percent of the time, are going to do what they are trained to do.

— Damon Cvasin, Cvasin Risk Advisory

The same logic explains why refreshers matter more than depth. A single long session fades; short, repeated reinforcement is what keeps the response available when someone needs it. Dan Stechow put the priority plainly when asked what leaders should take away from the session.

Training and culture, training and culture, training and culture — from the top to the bottom, and from the bottom to the top.

— Dan Stechow, TPOP

THE PRACTICAL TEST

If a brick came through the front window right now, would your team have something to fall back on? There is no time in that moment to find a guide, open a laptop, or read a playbook. Whatever they do will be what they were trained or told to do beforehand.

PART 4

Operational Leadership

A playbook only works if leaders know when and how to execute it. Reading conditions, choosing an operating posture, protecting people and place, and meeting your obligations.

From Planning to Execution

A playbook only works if leaders know when and how to execute it.



- **Conditions can change rapidly**
Stay oriented.
- **Decisions must be timely**
Late is its own decision.
- **Flexibility is essential**
Adapt, do not improvise blindly.
- **Leadership sets the tone**
Calm is contagious.

Every civil unrest event unfolds differently. The objective is not to follow a rigid checklist, but to use your playbook as a guide while adapting to changing conditions. Strong leadership provides confidence, consistency, and direction when employees need it most.

Modified Operations May Be the Best Option

Organizations often have more choices than simply remaining open or closing.



- **Limit customer access**
Fewer people, more control.
- **Restrict entrances**
One staffed way in.
- **Adjust operating hours**
Avoid the highest-risk windows.
- **Move to order-ahead or pickup models**
Reduce time spent in the store.

Business continuity does not always require normal operations, and closure is rarely the first protective step. Many organizations successfully reduce risk by modifying how they serve customers while maintaining essential operations. Any option that sends associates outside the building should be evaluated carefully against current conditions.

A NOTE ON CURBSIDE

Curbside service normally requires associates to carry product to a customer's vehicle. During active unrest that can place both the associate and the customer in harm's way. Treat it as a conditional option, not a default one.

Keep Hard Copies Within Reach

A plan you cannot open is not a plan.

■ Response guides in hard and soft copy

The immediate actions must be reachable.

■ Plan for power and network loss

Cyber events and outages take the intranet with them.

■ Preparatory playbooks can live online

There is time to review those.

■ Post them where people work

Access beats completeness.

One of the most practical points raised in the session was also the simplest: if the power fails or a cyber event takes down your network, an online-only playbook is unavailable at exactly the moment you need it. The distinction worth drawing is between preparation and response. A preparatory playbook can live on the intranet, because there is time to sit with it. A response guide — the three or four things to do right now — needs to exist on paper.

If you ever lose power and you do not have access to the internet or your intranet, you need something you can fall back on. We talk about that a lot with ransomware, when you cannot get to things like your insurance policy.

— Tom Cosgrove, FMI

Reaching People Quickly

Decide how you will tell everyone, before you need to tell them.

■ Mass notification and text platforms

Established tools handle the volume.

■ Confirm who can actually receive it

Part-time staff and union rules affect access.

■ A recorded information line

A single number staff can call.

■ Plan the after-message too

Where to gather, and headcounts.

Notification tools matter more for civil unrest than for a sudden incident, because unrest usually gives you some warning to use them. Whichever platform you choose, the constraint worth checking in advance is who can actually be reached: part-time employees may not be enrolled, and in some states union agreements affect phone and app usage on the job. That belongs in the preparedness plan, not in the middle of an event.

A CRISIS FLIPCHART IS WORTH BUILDING

Pick the top fifteen to twenty crisis types with your leadership team, write a one-page overview for each, and bind them into a hardcover flipbook with key numbers on the cover — utilities and non-emergency law enforcement. Post it in conspicuous areas so every shift can reach it.

Protecting Your People

Employees should understand the plan before they need to execute it.



- **Communicate early**
Before they hear it elsewhere.
- **Reinforce reporting expectations**
Say what you see.
- **Review emergency procedures**
Exits, roles, and signals.
- **Support employee concerns**
Listen and respond.

Employees perform best when expectations are clear. Frequent communication reduces uncertainty and helps employees understand both their responsibilities and the organization's commitment to their safety. If your organization does not have a see-something-say-something program, or something similar, that dialogue is where to start.

Confidence begins with preparation, not reaction.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

Protecting the Facility

Simple security measures can significantly reduce operational risk.



- **Secure access points**
Control the doors.
- **Protect critical assets**
Know what needs safeguarding.
- **Review cash-handling procedures**
Reduce the target.
- **Increase exterior awareness**
Watch the lot and approach.

Physical security should support operations without unnecessarily disrupting the customer experience. Small adjustments made before conditions deteriorate are often more effective than major changes made during an incident. Preparation should focus on reducing opportunities while maintaining flexibility.

Keep Decisions Coordinated

Every department should operate from the same information.



- **Maintain a common operating picture**
One shared view.
- **Share timely updates**
Even when little changed.
- **Confirm leadership decisions**
Close the loop.
- **Eliminate conflicting messages**
Mixed signals cost time.

One of the greatest challenges during civil unrest is maintaining alignment. Operations, Security, Human Resources, Legal, and Communications should all work from the same situational awareness and decision framework. A dedicated conference-call cadence with the key leaders is one of the simplest ways to keep everyone coordinated and informed.

You know something is coming off the rails when all of a sudden leaders are creating their own private chat groups or text threads, or people are calling around asking for updates.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

Duty of Care and OSHA Expectations

Preparation is both a protection for people and a regulatory expectation.



- **A reasonable duty to protect people on site**
Employees and customers alike.
- **OSHA's General Duty Clause covers recognized hazards**
A known standard.
- **Workplace violence is increasingly treated as one**
The expectation is rising.
- **Planning and training support compliance**
Preparation is evidence.

Duty of care is the responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect employees and customers, and under OSHA's General Duty Clause employers must address recognized hazards, which increasingly include workplace violence. Documenting what you plan and what you do demonstrates good faith.

If something bad happens and you knew about it because it was all over social media — you were aware but did not act — that is where businesses get into trouble.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

NOT LEGAL ADVICE

This is general information. Confirm specific obligations with qualified counsel and safety professionals.

Legal Considerations That Shape Decisions

Factors to weigh with counsel before the event.



■ **Closure decisions and wage-and-hour implications**

Closing affects pay and scheduling.

■ **Public communications and brand exposure**

Messaging cuts both ways.

■ **Consistency and documentation of decisions**

Records reduce exposure.

■ **Engage Legal early, not after**

Build the framework together.

Operational decisions during unrest carry legal dimensions that are easier to manage when anticipated. Closures affect wages, scheduling, and contractual commitments that deserve forethought. Consistent, well-documented decision-making reduces exposure and supports fair treatment across locations. Public communications can protect or damage the brand depending on how they are handled. Involving Legal while building the framework, rather than in the middle of a crisis, allows the organization to decide with confidence.

PART 5

Recovery and Future Readiness

Recovery begins before the incident ends. How you restore operations, support people, and capture the lessons determines how ready you are for the next one.

Recovery Begins Before the Incident Ends

Decisions made during an incident directly influence how quickly your organization recovers.



- **Plan for recovery early**
Think past the event.
- **Restore operations deliberately**
Reopening is a decision.
- **Support employees throughout**
Not just afterward.
- **Document key decisions**
While memory is fresh.

Recovery should not begin after the event is over; it should be considered throughout the response. Decisions made during the incident affect employee confidence, operational continuity, and the organization's ability to resume normal business. Returning to normal operations should be a deliberate process rather than an automatic one, coordinated with investigators and communicated clearly.

Supporting Employees After the Event

Recovery includes both operational and human considerations.



- **Communicate frequently**
Silence reads as indifference.
- **Address employee concerns**
Ask, then act.
- **Reinforce available resources**
Remind them what exists.
- **Recognize exceptional performance**
Name the good catches.

Employees may have experienced fear, uncertainty, or significant stress during the event. Checking in regularly, listening to their concerns, and making sure people know what resources are available all help rebuild a sense of stability. Some effects appear later, so support should continue well beyond the first days.

Clear communication, visible leadership, and access to organizational support help restore confidence. Recognizing employees who responded professionally reinforces the culture of preparedness as well.

— **Damon Cavin**, Cavin Risk Advisory

Conduct an After-Action Review

Every incident provides an opportunity to improve.



- **What worked well?**
Keep and codify it.
- **What needs improvement?**
Name it plainly.
- **What surprised us?**
Surprises are gaps.
- **What should change?**
Turn it into an action.

An after-action review should occur while observations are still fresh. The objective is to identify lessons learned, not assign blame, and it should include every function that responded. Honest discussions help strengthen future planning and improve organizational resilience.

Update the Playbook

Preparedness is a continuous process, not a one-time project.



- **Revise decision criteria**
Sharpen the thresholds.
- **Update communication plans**
Fix what was slow.
- **Incorporate lessons learned**
Make it institutional.
- **Schedule future exercises**
Put it on the calendar.

Every event should make the organization better prepared for the next one. Updating the playbook ensures that new lessons become institutional knowledge rather than individual experience. Organizations that continually refine their plans become more confident and more resilient over time.

CONCLUSION

Five Take-Aways

Prepared organizations preserve options and protect people.

1

Preparation begins long before disruption reaches your door

Civil unrest is a progression, not an event. The operational challenges — traffic, staffing, access, customer behavior — almost always arrive before a crowd does.

2

A simple decision framework keeps operational options open

Decide in advance who can modify or close a location, and what conditions move a site between operating states. Simplicity is what makes a framework usable under pressure.

3

Alignment across functions turns a plan into action

Security, Operations, HR, Legal, Communications, and executive leadership must work from one picture and one framework. Alignment built in calm time is what lets the organization move as one.

4

Culture and training carry best practices across the organization

A written plan does not change behavior. Leadership expectation, reinforcement, and the right mix of online and in-person training are what move preparedness from a document into daily operations.

5

Every event should make the next response stronger

Review honestly while it is fresh, update the playbook, and schedule the next exercise. Preparedness is a continuous process, not a one-time project.

The goal is not to predict the next disruption. This is not about prognostication. This is about being ready when it arrives.

— Dan Stechow, TPOP

THE GOAL IS CONFIDENCE

Prepared teams are calmer, not more fearful. Confidence comes from knowing what to watch for, who decides, and what happens next — long before anything happens.

Tabletop in a Box

A demonstration is growing nearby. Walk the decision tree before you need it.



THE SCENARIO

- A permitted protest two blocks away is drawing a larger crowd
- Conditions are changing by the minute
- Traffic and parking are backing up, and some participants enter the store
- Leadership must choose an operating posture

ASK YOUR TEAM

What conditions would move this from open to modified operations?

Name the specific triggers, not a general feeling.

Who makes that call, and who can make it if they are unreachable?

Authority should already be assigned and pre-authorized.

What gets communicated first, to whom, and by whom?

Employees, customers, corporate, and responders each need something different.

Which modified-operations option fits these conditions?

Restrict entrances, limit access, adjust hours, or move to pickup.

At what point does this become an executive decision?

Define the escalation threshold in advance.

What would we document, and when?

Decisions and timing, captured while fresh.

HOW TO RUN IT

Keep the focus on timely, criteria-based decisions rather than predicting the outcome. The objective is to find the gaps in a low-stakes setting — then update the playbook with what you learned.

Q&A Highlights

Questions from the audience, answered by the panel. Lightly condensed for readability.

Q From FMI's perspective, what has changed over the past few years that has made civil unrest a bigger concern for retailers and grocers?

Some of these events are happening more often, but they are also being brought to the forefront — natural disasters, active shooter incidents, and similar events. What has really changed is that we are learning more about them and doing a much better job of responding, particularly in how we take care of employees and customers. The other factor is misinformation across both social and traditional media, where the clickbait impulse can make a situation worse.

— Tom Cosgrove, FMI

Q What is usually the first thing that starts to go wrong when an organization is not prepared?

Communication. You know something is coming off the rails when leaders suddenly start creating their own private chat groups or text threads, or people begin calling around asking for updates. The fix is the playbook: clear decision models, a cadence of calls, and communication templates prepared in advance. You do not have to anticipate every single scenario — you just have to have the big blocks covered. That makes the incident flow more smoothly and gets you to recovery faster.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

Q Have playbooks always been a cornerstone of asset protection, or is this a newer approach?

It has really emerged over the last decade, and especially since COVID. Asset protection and security professionals have been leaned on much more heavily in the last six to eight years, particularly around workplace violence, threat assessment, and threat management. Twenty years ago that vernacular barely existed. If someone got angry or there was a fight in a store, you called the police and managed it. Now there is an expectation that we anticipate these things and build playbooks and response documents ahead of time.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

Q Should the playbook live in hard copy or online?

You need both. If you ever lose power or access to your intranet, you need something to fall back on. Damon added a useful distinction: response guides should exist in hard and soft copy, while a playbook that is preparatory in nature can be soft copy, because there is time to sit and review it. For the immediate response — the three or four things to do right now — you want hard copies.

— Tom Cosgrove, FMI, and Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

Q What about crisis management flipcharts?

They are great tools. Pick the top fifteen to twenty crisis types with your leadership team, create a one-page overview for each, and put them into a hardcover flipbook with key phone numbers on the front — utility services, non-emergency law enforcement. Post them in conspicuous areas around the location so everybody has access. It really helps people execute during an actual incident.

— Damon Cavin, Cavin Risk Advisory

Q&A Highlights (continued)

Q What communication and technology tools are effective for quickly reaching store employees?

Mass notification and text message services work well, and there are several established platforms in that space. For an active shooter event, honestly, a text message is probably already too late. But civil unrest usually gives you some advance warning, so those tools matter — as does something as simple as a recorded information line staff can call. Tom added an important caveat: plan for who can actually receive these. Part-time employees may not be enrolled, and in some states union rules affect who can have phones and apps on the job. That has to be part of the preparedness plan.

— **Damon Cavin**, Cavin Risk Advisory, with **Tom Cosgrove**, FMI

Q Should stores keep board-up supplies on hand?

If you know it is coming, yes. A lot of stores in hurricane regions already keep that on hand, because the brick through the window is just as likely to be thrown by the wind. Not everyone has the space for it, and every square inch of a store is valuable, so it is not something everybody can stock. But if there is an inkling of civil unrest and a history of violence, it is definitely worth looking into — and facilities and real estate should be part of that conversation.

— **Tom Cosgrove**, FMI

Q Can you walk us through deciding whether to stay open, modify operations, or temporarily close?

You seek more information first. If a social media post announces a protest in an adjacent parking lot, you probably do not close right away. You reach out to law enforcement for their perspective: is it a permitted event, what has their experience been with these organizers, how much velocity is it gathering online. Then you watch against the decision points already in your playbook — if the crowd grows past a certain size, if people start parking in your lot, if it spills over. What you are really watching for is whether there is going to be violence. Someone has to be boots on the ground, and leadership needs that cadence of updates. If crowds keep growing after dark, closing a few hours early to get associates out safely may be the right call.

— **Damon Cavin**, Cavin Risk Advisory

Q How do you decide between sheltering in place and evacuating?

That should be built into the playbook. If the environment outside the store is such that it is more dangerous for associates to leave than to stay, then sheltering in place is the decision, based on the facts and the intelligence you are gathering on the ground. And follow the direction of public agencies and law enforcement — in many cases they are the single source of truth on all of it.

— **Damon Cavin**, Cavin Risk Advisory

TOOLS AND TACTICS RAISED IN THIS SESSION

Direct-line numbers for key law enforcement, because 911 saturates during an event • mass notification and text platforms, with enrollment confirmed for part-time staff • a recorded information line as a fallback • a hardcover crisis flipchart covering your top fifteen to twenty scenarios • hard-copy response guides that survive a power or network loss • board-up materials where there is a history of violence • social monitoring to catch calls to action early.

The Path to Reducing Workplace Violence

How leaders account for prevention training determines whether it survives the budget.

The most useful shift a leader can make is how they account for preparedness. Treated as a line-item cost, it is the first thing cut. Treated as protection for revenue, brand, and people, it earns its place in the budget — and it keeps earning it between events.

STOP THINKING OF TRAINING AS

A cost center — an expense to minimize, defer, or cut.

START THINKING OF TRAINING AS

A revenue and brand protector — a measurable investment in resilience.

Move	What It Looks Like
Calculate the exposure	Closure, turnover, liability, and lost-productivity costs are real and estimable. Put a number on them.
Reframe the spend	Position preparedness as protection for revenue, brand, and people, not as overhead.
Pair digital with human	Online micro-lessons normalize the language; live discussion and tabletops make it land.
Measure the behavior	Track early reports, exercises run, and good catches, not just incidents avoided.
Keep it alive between events	Reinforce in pre-shift huddles and team meetings so it does not decay to an annual checkbox.

ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

- Name the decision owner for each location

Who can modify or close?
- Draft one holding statement

Ready to adapt.
- Confirm your law-enforcement contact

Before you need them.
- Schedule one tabletop this quarter

Put it on the calendar.

PREPARED TODAY. PROTECTED TOMORROW.

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PREPAREDNESS™



THREE WAYS WE CAN HELP



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& CUSTOMER
INTERACTION
BEST PRACTICES



SITUATIONAL
AWARENESS



BEHAVIORAL
INDICATORS



SURVIVING AN
ACTIVE SHOOTER /
ACTIVE ASSAILANT
EVENT



RESPONDING TO
SHOPLIFTING &
THEFT BEHAVIOR



INTERACTIONS
WITH HOMELESS
PERSONS



CIVIL UNREST:
AWARENESS &
SAFETY



UNDERSTANDING
YOUR WPV
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COMPLIANCE