



## The Threat Landscape in 2022

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# THE THREAT LANDSCAPE



**Why not read our 'UK Terrorism in 2022' briefing paper?**

The threats facing modern businesses are complex and rapidly evolving. As we adopt new ways of working and new technologies, we are creating new vulnerabilities that could be exploited by these dynamic threat actors.

## **Terrorism**

With the current threat to the UK from terrorism 'severe', meaning that an attack is highly likely, terrorism is one of the biggest security concerns. Attacks could potentially occur at any location, and preventing them can prove challenging, as the targeting is usually an individual choice which cannot always be anticipated. Following a number of low-sophistication terror attacks at public spaces, in addition to the devastation of larger-scale atrocities such as the bombing at the Manchester Arena that killed 22, the government began consulting on the introduction of new Protect Duty legisla-

Since that consultation began in February 2021, there have been further terrorist attacks in the UK, with the fatal stabbing of MP Sir David Amess at his constituency surgery in Essex on 15th October, and the bomb attack outside Liverpool Women's Hospital on Remembrance Sunday. There are also concerns that the lockdowns brought in to help control the pandemic, increased the number of radicalised, potential 'lone wolf' attackers, as people spent more time alone, online. This concern extends to young people, who became more vulnerable to being groomed by extremists. Recent Home Office figures have shown an increase in the number of children being detained over terror crimes.

There is also evidence that far-right groups have been trying to recruit anti-vaxers on messaging platform chat rooms. Experts fear that the far-right and anti-vaccine movements could result in individuals carrying out terror attacks after being radicalised by talk of martyrdom, taking up arms, and executions. [\(For more on Covid related activists see page 5\)](#)

**“Terrorism is one of the biggest security concerns.”**

## 2 Activism and Civil Disobedience

Activist groups that could pose a threat to modern businesses include Extinction Rebellion, Insulate Britain and the anti-vax movement, with the likelihood of an increase in activity in the Spring 2022.

### Extinction Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion has announced that in April 2022 it is planning to create the largest act of civil resistance in UK history.

With a focus on prolonged, disruptive, non-violent civil resistance it, and other organised campaign groups, are highly likely to take action against specific companies they identify as acting too slowly on climate change or having links to other businesses that they perceive are acting too slowly.

In August/September 2021 a two-week series of protests based in London focused on banks' continued investment in fossil fuels, new road infrastructure, the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, treatment of animals on Crown Estate land and the fashion and fast food industry. Extinction Rebellion and other environmental groups held daily protests during the period. Oxford Circus was blocked off and both London Bridge and Tower Bridge were shut down. Met officers removed 133 people locked or glued to roads and buildings.

During COP26 in Glasgow, thousands of protesters from Extinction Rebellion and other protest groups took part in demonstrations and protests.

It is estimated that, during 2021, Extinction Rebellion's actions caused more than GBP 100 million in economic damage to the UK and consumed thousands of policing hours, among other public resources.

**“We are likely to see increased activity in Spring 2022.”**

# THE THREAT LANDSCAPE

## Insulate Britain

The group, which is calling for a national programme to ensure homes are insulated to be low energy by 2030 to cut carbon emissions, repeatedly blocked major roads between September and November 2021, causing massive traffic disruption. Activists also often glued their hands to the road or each other to make it harder to remove them.

After a court injunction to ban protests on motorways and major A roads in England, a number of protesters were arrested and jailed for defying the injunction.

Members have said that they plan to re-start protests in Spring 2022.

## Covid-related Protest

Protests against Covid vaccinations, mask wearing, and restrictions brought in to control the virus are carried out by a wide range of different groups and individuals.

In December 2021 protesters marched through London, and other cities demanding NHS Covid passes be abolished. Organised by Fiona Hine of World Wide Rally For Freedom, another rally took place on January 22nd.

In December, a group led by Piers Corbyn and Jeff Wyatt, marched through Milton Keynes. Some activists later stormed a coronavirus testing site in the city, abusing staff and stealing test equipment.

In early January 2022, around 1,000 protesters marched in Glasgow, in a protest believed to be organised by Scotland Against Lockdown.

According to an investigation by The Times, some anti-vaxers are turning to extremist beliefs and advocating violence against healthcare workers. Analysis of the messaging app Telegram, popular with anti-vaccine and conspiracy theorists, found that the messages posted in group chats set up to oppose lockdown or vaccination have become more radical and violent.

In addition, thousands of anti-vaccine activists have joined a group running combat training sessions and threatening direct action. The group, Alpha Men Assemble, has hosted several meetings for "training and strategy tactics" including boxing drills and a scrummaging exercise, in which two groups of dozens of people tried to push each other back.

**“... some anti-vaxers are turning to extremist beliefs and advocating violence.”**

## 3 Urban Exploration

The trend for young people to trespass into commercial buildings to explore, climb and post videos of their activity, poses a significant threat to businesses.

Typical urban exploration includes free-climbing the exterior of structures or completing a 24 hour or 'overnight' challenge: gaining entry while the building is open and then emerging later to complete a range of activities.

The targeted structures are usually either ongoing building projects or iconic high-rise city buildings and the activity presents a variety of risks. These include:

- **Physical danger** to the climber on a business's property
- **Risk of legal action** against the building's owners if the intruder is injured or killed
- **Disruption to business operations**, particularly if an evacuation is required
- **Damage to property**
- **Reputational damage**, as content is posted on social media

In addition, with the content being available online, Urban Exploration presents organised criminal gangs and terrorists with free hostile reconnaissance to help determine a building's weaknesses or possible access points.

“The trend for young people to trespass into commercial buildings poses a significant threat.”

## 4 Insider Threat

Insider threat can take many forms. It could be a **'deliberate insider'** that obtains employment with the intent of abusing their access, a **'volunteer/self-initiated insider'** who obtains employment without intent to abuse their access, but at some point, decides to do so, an **'exploited/recruited insider'** who obtains employment without intent to abuse their access, but at some point, are exploited or recruited by a third party to do so, or an **'accidental insider,'** who by their actions might inadvertently leak information or provide other types of access, either because they haven't received adequate training, or because they have been asked to undertake an action that they don't recognise as being something they shouldn't do.

A personnel security programme is required to minimise the risk of insider threat, as well as the need to have adequate controls to protect against unauthorised access to data. There is useful guidance [here](#)

## 5 Accidents, Fire, Natural Disaster

Accidents can happen at any time, and there is also the chance that your business could be affected by fire, flood or other natural disasters, either within the building, in an adjoining business or in the close vicinity.

Having a clear plan of action and security officers with relevant training, such as first aid and fire warden training, can make a huge difference to the impact of an event. Security can play a key role in incident response, for example, in fire marshalling, first response or building evacuation.

False alarms can also have a major impact on business operations, especially if a building has to be evacuated unnecessarily, so a fast and effective security team response to alarms is key.

**“Security plays a key role in incident response.”**

## 6 Theft

In any business there is the risk of theft of personal items, equipment and data. With many modern businesses working remotely, the theft of equipment, such as laptops, dongles, and even employee passes can lead to an increased risk of data theft.

With more employees cycling to work and many bikes worth thousands of pounds, bike theft is also a real risk, while in some areas, opportunists aim to steal mobile phones as employees leave work.

In addition to preventing unauthorised access, security providers can support businesses by providing a permanent 'eyes on' what is happening, monitoring high risk areas, such as bike storage, as well as highlighting key risk areas and avoidance strategies to support employee education.

## 7 Covid

Covid is a threat to security on many levels, from risks associated with new ways of working to potential staff shortages.

The pandemic has led to significant changes in ways of working and this has made cyber security, as well as physical security, more difficult for many organisations.

The Government's cyber security breaches survey of March 2021, found that, with the move to home working, many organisations had initiated substantial changes to their digital infrastructure which had led to new challenges, which could impact on their cyber security. Working from home, employees and businesses could become more vulnerable to cyber-attack, especially as, without colleagues around them, staff may be more likely to be taken in by a threat actor and inadvertently allow access.

In addition, home working has made physical security more difficult for many organisations. Not only is it more difficult to protect people and equipment based in multiple home locations, but the knock-on effect of buildings with few or no occupants also has risk consequences for people and property.

The wearing of masks due to Covid has brought additional challenges. A mask can make it more difficult to assess someone because, as well as obscuring their face, it can also affect how they speak. Consequently officers have to rely on other skills and senses to make an assessment. Mask wearing may also have an impact on the ability to detect hostile reconnaissance, so higher levels of training and vigilance may be required.

Covid may cause high levels of absence which, as well as affecting customers' staff, could also impact the security provider. The modern organisation needs to ensure that their security provider is large enough to cover staff absences due to illness.

It is also worth considering the role that security staff can play to help minimise transmission within the business by acting as 'Covid ambassadors'. They are ideally positioned to monitor and manage social distancing and remind employees and visitors about mask wearing, where appropriate. The goal is to make everyone feel comfortable in the workplace in the knowledge that guidelines are being followed.

**“Covid is a threat to security  
on many levels.”**

**“Employers have a duty of care to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees.”**

## **8** Conflict and Harassment. Stress and Mental Distress

Most businesses will experience conflict or harassment at some time. It could be an angry employee who has been let go, an altercation between employees, or an issue with voyeurism or harassment from within or outside the businesses. In addition, employees can become stressed and experience mental distress.

Employers have a duty of care to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees, contractors, visitors and clients.

Security officers can play an important role in helping to ensure that this obligation is met. Security should ensure that staff are safe if they are working alone late into the night and can also support with guidance on how to stay safe when travelling to and from the office. They should be trained in conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques, as well as being able to effectively deal with issues such as voyeurism or harassment in the workplace.

In addition, security officers should be trained to recognise signs of mental distress and be able to act appropriately to support the individual.

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