



Environmental Protest Groups: Tactics and Terms

Environmental protest groups will likely continue to use social media and conduct demonstrations and disruption campaigns to generate attention and support for their cause nationwide. In 2019, activists carried out demonstrations, unannounced pop-up protests, and acts of civil disobedience in major cities worldwide, including the District.

- On September 23, police arrested 32 protesters in the District for blocking roadways and key intersections and causing traffic delays during the “#ShutDownDC Global Climate Strike 2019.” Demonstrators blocked roads with human chains, cars, and vans, conducted sit-ins, and chained themselves to ladders and a sailboat to disrupt traffic flow. Major commuter routes and intersections—including intersections at K and 16th Street NW, Washington and Independence Avenue NW, and 3rd Street and New York Avenue NW—were blocked. According to authorities, the roadblocks inconvenienced “thousands of people” during their morning commute.
- In July, 17 members of the environmental activist movement, Extinction Rebellion (XR), glued themselves to each other, the underground shuttle, and the Metro entranceways in the US Capitol building. The group hoped to disrupt commuter traffic and interact with Congress members on their way to a vote. They were later arrested on various charges including crowding, obstructing or incommoding, defacing public property, and resisting arrest.

Environmental protest groups are staging more frequent demonstrations and employing a variety of civil disobedience tactics to disrupt traffic, commuting, and normal business activities. The groups often target high profile landmarks and the transportation sector—including bridges, waterways, public transportation networks, and public thoroughfares.

Terms Associated with the Environmental Protest Movement

Climate Crisis/Climate Emergency: Environmental protest groups have shifted language from climate change and global warming to climate crisis and climate and ecological emergency to emphasize the current global impact and to encourage aggressive governmental mitigation.

Climate Rebels: Environmental protest groups and climate protesters refer to themselves as climate rebels.

Climate Criminals: Environmental protest groups’ label for corporations, such as petroleum companies and lobbyists for the oil and gas industry, they accuse of contributing to climate change.

Crusty or Crusties: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson coined this derogatory term to refer to climate change protestors in the United Kingdom. Environmental protest groups, such as Extinction Rebellion, have since adopted the term.

Sixth Mass Extinction: Reference to a massive die-off of plants and animal species (10 to 100 species every year) caused, according to some scientists, by human activity.

#ShutDownDC: Trending hashtag on social media associated with September 23, 2019 climate protest in Washington, DC.

#ClimateStrike: A top Twitter hashtag in 2019, inspired by Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who called on people worldwide to walk out of school or work and participate in a climate protest.

#FridaysforFuture: Inspired by Greta Thunberg, who called on students worldwide to walkout of schools on Fridays to protest and demand action on climate change. Thunberg, in August 2018, stood outside the Swedish parliament holding a sign that read “skolstrejk för klimatet” or “school strike for the climate”.



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Tactic	Human Chains	Sit-Ins/Die-Ins/Lie-Ins	Lock-Ons	Glue-Ons	Climbing/Rappelling of Structures	Banner Drops	Use of Large Objects
<p>Description</p>	<p>Human chains are protests in which demonstrators link arms forming a physical barrier to block pedestrian or vehicle traffic.</p>	<p>Sit-ins, sit downs, die-ins, and lie-ins are protests in which demonstrators physically lay or sit down, occupying a location and refusing to move until demands are met.</p>	<p>Lock-ons involve protestors attaching themselves to doors and entrances with chains, handcuffs, bike locks, metal or PVC piping, barrels, or duct tape to obstruct access and block pedestrian or vehicle traffic.</p>	<p>Glue-ons involve using glue to adhere protestors to a building, vehicle, or another person to block pedestrian and vehicle traffic.</p>	<p>Protestors climb trees, structures, and rappel from cranes and bridges to occupy a location, and refuse to leave until their demands are met, impacting water channels and delaying construction efforts.</p>	<p>Protestors climb billboards, buildings, and most often bridges, to release banners with their slogans and complaints. Banners often target a specific entity such as a corporation, political group, or agency.</p>	<p>Demonstrators use large objects or props (for example, inflatable globes and a sailboat which have been used in DC climate protests) to spread their message, increase media attention, and block roads and major thoroughfares.</p>
<p>Likely Impacts</p>	<p>Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.</p>	<p>Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.</p>	<p>Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.</p>	<p>Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.</p>	<p>Blocked water channels impact local import and export of goods. Blocked roads and traffic congestion may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.</p>	<p>Blocked water channels impact local import and export of goods. Blocked roads and traffic congestion may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.</p>	<p>Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.</p>
<p>Examples</p>	<p>27 June 2018: Protesters locked arms and blocked the street in front of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters in Southwest DC.</p>	<p>7 October 2019: XR members conducted a 'die-in' outside the New York Stock Exchange in New York City to raise awareness about climate-related disease and disasters.</p>	<p>23 September 2019: Demonstrators "locked on" to a sailboat at the intersection of K and 16th Streets NW during the #ShutdownDC climate protest, which resulted in traffic delays.</p>	<p>23 July 2019: Protesters trying to raise awareness about climate change glued themselves to doors and walls of the US Capitol building, blocking both pedestrian and employee traffic.</p>	<p>12 September 2019: Members of Greenpeace USA were arrested after rappelling off the Fred Hartman Bridge in Houston, Texas.</p>	<p>18 September 2019: XR members conducted a banner drop on a billboard on the Brooklyn Queens Expressway in New York City. The banner stated "Act Now" along with the organization's logo and name.</p>	<p>23 September 2019: Members of XR stationed a sailboat at the intersection of K and 16th Streets NW during the #ShutdownDC climate protest. The intersection was blocked and caused traffic delays.</p>

The NTIC encourages the public to report all suspicious activity to local authorities through the [iWatchDC](#) platform.