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## Summary

# **SPECIAL COVERAGE: Occupy Wall Street**

October 2011

**Mass gatherings associated with public protest movements can have disruptive effects on transportation, commercial, and government services, especially when staged in major metropolitan areas. Large scale demonstrations also carry the potential for violence, presenting a significant challenge for law enforcement.**

## ***Background***

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement is a loose coalition of ongoing peaceful protests taking place in cities across the United States. The OWS movement began with demonstrations staged in New York City's financial district, where protesters have taken up residence since September 17. The protests focus primarily on issues of economic justice, including corruption in the financial system, the government's handling of the global financial crisis, wealth disparity, and the role of corporate money in the U.S. political system. As a self-identified "leaderless resistance movement," OWS lacks an official set of demands and has co-opted support from participants seeking to bring attention to a wide range of social, economic, political, and environmental issues. The movement has drawn inspiration from recent protests in Europe and the Middle East, specifically citing "the Egyptian Tahrir Square uprising" and recent demonstrations in Spain. The first day of the protest drew approximately 1,000 protesters to Wall Street and the movement has grown considerably since, with an encampment of protesters occupying nearby Zucotti Square in Lower Manhattan. The OWS protests continued to gain momentum in the following weeks, sparking smaller demonstrations in major cities nationwide. Although the protests have been mostly peaceful, hundreds of arrests have been made by local police forces, mostly for trespassing, disorderly conduct, and obstructing traffic.

**Sources:** [Occupytogether.org](http://Occupytogether.org); [Occupywallstreet.org](http://Occupywallstreet.org); [Bloomberg](http://Bloomberg); [The Guardian](http://TheGuardian)

## ***Sector-Specific Impacts***

### ***Financial Services***

The financial services sector has served as the focal point of the OWS movement, with protesters holding protests and camping out in the financial districts of cities such as Boston, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.

#### **New York:**

- Protesters have staged numerous marches and rallies on Wall Street and the areas surrounding the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). On October 5, roughly 200 protesters attempted to storm police barricades blocking protesters from the area. (**Source:** [New York Daily News](http://NewYorkDailyNews))
- On October 14, protesters once again attempted to breach the barricades blocking access to Wall

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Street and the NYSE after learned they would not be evicted from Zucotti Park. (**Source:** [CBS News](#); [Associated Press](#))

- On October 5, the “hacktivist” group Anonymous vowed to “erase” the NYSE from the Internet on October 10. NYSE’s Web site suffered a brief interruption of service October 10, but there was no indication of a cyber attack. (**Source:** [CNN](#))

**Chicago:**

- Protesters from Occupy Chicago have camped outside of the Chicago branch of the Federal Reserve Bank since September 23. (**Source:** [Chicago Tribune](#))
- On October 10 and 11, demonstrations targeted the Chicago Board of Trade and meetings of the Mortgage Bankers Association and the Futures Industry Association. (**Source:** [WLS-TV 7 Chicago](#); [Reuters](#))
- On October 11, five women were arrested after dumping garbage taken from a foreclosed home owned by Bank of America in the lobby one of the bank's branches. (**Source:** [Reuters](#))

**San Francisco:**

- On October 12, roughly 100-200 members of the Occupy SF movement marched in the city's financial district and blocked the entrances of Wells Fargo Corporate Headquarters, leading to 11 arrests. (**Source:** [Reuters](#))

***Commercial Facilities***

Movement organizers have used public parks and plazas, as well as private property, as areas of public assembly for OWS-linked protests. In many cases, these protests have been staged without permits, leading to arrests. These large gatherings have had a major impact on surrounding business and retail districts. In some cases, commercial facilities have been targeted directly by OWS demonstrations.

**New York:**

- The encampment at the privately owned Zucotti Park has become the focal point of the movement, providing a gathering area for protesters, a logistical center for communications, and the distribution of food, water, and medical supplies. (**Source:** [New York Times](#))
- On October 1, OWS in New York staged a “Millionaires March,” marching from Zucotti Park to demonstrate outside the homes of some of the city’s richest residents. (**Source:** [MSNBC](#))
- On October 8, protesters marched from Zucotti Park to occupy Manhattan’s Washington Square Park for a general assembly meeting. (**Source:** [CBS News](#))
- On October 14, New York City and Zucotti Park officials emboldened protesters by postponing a planned clean up of the park that would have required a temporary evacuation. (**Source:** [New York Daily News](#))

**Chicago:**

- On October 10, 3,000 protesters in Chicago gathered outside of the Art Institute of Chicago where a reception for the Futures Industry Association was taking place. (**Source:** [WLS-TV 7 Chicago](#))
- On October 11, police arrested 16 protesters outside of the downtown Hyatt Regency where the

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annual conference of the Mortgage Bankers Association was underway. (**Source:** [Reuters](#))

**Boston:**

- On October 11, approximately 100 protesters were arrested by Boston police after migrating from nearby Dewey Square in Boston's financial district, to the Rose Kennedy Greenway, where they had been warned not to congregate by Boston Police. (**Source:** [Boston Globe](#))

**Seattle:**

- On October 10, Seattle Police urged protesters to relocate from Westlake Park, located in the center of the city's downtown shopping district, to a location near city hall. (**Source:** [New York Times](#))

**Transportation**

Taking place primarily in downtown areas, the OWS demonstrations have had a significant impact on transportation, causing widespread traffic jams, road closures, and suspension of public transit.

**New York:**

- On September 30, New York Police arrested 700 protesters for blocking the roadway during a march across the Brooklyn Bridge. (**Source:** [Huffington Post](#))

**San Francisco:**

- On October 12, Occupy San Francisco protests forced the suspension of cable car service in the city's financial district. (**Source:** [Bay Area News Group](#))

**Portland, Oregon:**

- On October 6, a gathering of 10,000 protesters caused TriMet, the public agency in charge of mass transit in Portland, to temporarily suspend service and forced police to block-off several roadways. (**Source:** [Portland Oregonian](#))

**Emergency Services**

The OWS protests have placed a considerable burden on emergency services personnel to control crowds, protect critical infrastructure, and maintain public order. Although there have been hundreds of arrests made, most have been for minor offenses and confrontations between police and protesters have been rare. Police departments have sought to minimize these types of incidents, enhance security, and heighten awareness through public-private information sharing.

**New York:**

- The extra manpower needed to police the protests are also placing a financial burden on emergency services, costing the New York Police Department (NYPD) \$1.9 million mostly in overtime as of October 10. (**Source:** [MSNBC](#))
- The NYPD has kept banks in the loop about protester activity by sending out email blasts to its Lower Manhattan Security Initiative and Midtown Manhattan Security Initiative. The emails tell landlords and occupants in those areas, including large banks, where protesters are headed and whether there are any unusual risks. (**Source:** [Reuters](#))

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A distinct feature of OWS is how it was born from online organization and continues to use social media to spread its message, organize further protests, and keep protesters connected. OWS and the broader Occupy Together movement that organizes protests in other cities use services such as Twitter, Tumblr, Meetup, and Facebook to this end, as well as having set up a live video feed of the OWS encampment in New York. Announcements, videos, and images are all collected and disseminated via these social networks as well as on the OWS Web site.



- On September 24 and October 5, NYPD officers resorted to pepper spray to subdue protesters. The September 24 incident is under investigation. ([Source: DNAinfo.com](#))
- On October 14, protesters wielding brooms and throwing bottles and garbage clashed erupted with police as protesters attempted to breach the barricades blocking access to Wall Street and the NYSE, leading to 14 arrests. One protester was injured by a police scooter. ([Source: CBS News; Associated Press](#))

**Boston:**

- The Boston Police Department (BPD) has also reached out to protesters, issuing a notice which informed protesters of applicable laws and what to expect from BPD officers, as well as communicated with Occupy Boston's members via the movement's Twitter account. ([Source: Boston Globe; MSNBC](#))

***Government Facilities***

OWS-inspired protests have also impacted government facilities, with protests staged at city halls and courthouses in cities such as Los Angeles, Portland, and Chicago, and marches staged in Washington, D.C.

**Washington, D.C.:**

- On October 6, members from the Occupy D.C. movement marched near the White House and protested at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. ([Source: Washington Examiner](#))
- On October 9, approximately 200 Occupy D.C. participants and anti-war protesters forced the closure of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. ([Source: Associated Press](#))
- On October 11, U.S. Capitol Police arrested six people affiliated with Occupy D.C. movement at the U.S. Senate Hart Office Building for "unlawful conduct — demonstrating in a Capitol building." ([Source: Washington Post](#))

**Denver:**

- On October 14, police arrested 23 people and dismantled a protester encampment illegally erected on the grounds of the State Capitol building in Denver. ([Source: Associated Press](#)).

## **Summary**

Since the initial September 17 protest which drew 1,000 participants to Wall Street, OWS-inspired groups have staged protests in upwards of 70 cities across the United States, including most major metropolitan areas. The largest gathering to date came on October 5, when an estimated 15,000 protesters marched on Wall Street and the NYSE. In addition, Occupytogether.org, an OWS-affiliated Web site, lists over 1,500 geographically unique online communities in 25 countries seeking to participate in the demonstrations. As the movement has spread, it has garnered increased media attention, significantly expanded its demographic base, and co-opted support from labor unions, social action groups, and the “hacktivist” collective, Anonymous, among others.

Social media and the organic emergence of online communities have driven the rapid expansion of the OWS movement. In New York, OWS leaders have also formed ad hoc committees to organize protesters and manage communications, logistics, and security. The OWS encampment in Zucotti Park features a medical station, distribution point for food and water, and a media center complete with generators and wireless Internet. Organizers hold general assembly meetings twice a day and have established committees and working groups including an Internet Working Group and a Direct Action Committee, which plans protest activities and works to maintain peaceful and controlled demonstrations. This high level of organization has allowed OWS to sustain its operations, disseminate its message, and garner increasing levels of support.

The growing support for the OWS movement has expanded the protests’ impact and increased the potential for violence. While the peaceful nature of the protests has served so far to mitigate their impact, larger numbers and support from groups such as Anonymous substantially increase the risk for potential incidents and enhance the potential security risk to critical infrastructure (CI). The continued expansion of these protests also places an increasingly heavy burden on law enforcement and movement organizers to control protesters. As the primary target of the demonstrations, financial services stands the sector most impacted by the OWS protests. Due to the location of the protests in major metropolitan areas, heightened and continuous situational awareness for security personnel across all CI sectors is encouraged.

**Sources:** [Bloomberg](#); [The Guardian](#); [New York Post](#); [Time](#); [NYC General Assembly](#); [The Guardian](#)

### **Resources: Occupy Wall Street Online**

[Occupy Wall Street Web site](#): News from the NYC protesters.

[AdBusters Occupy Wall Street Web site](#): Live video and Twitter feeds and other resources.

[Occupy Together Web site](#): Resources and news for the larger Occupy movement.

[@OccupyWallSt NYC Twitter account](#): OWS main Twitter account postings.

[#OccupyWallStreet Twitter tag search results](#): One of two main Twitter tags used to discuss the NYC protests.

[#OWS Twitter tag search results](#): Second of two main Twitter tags used to discuss the NYC protests.

[#OccupyWallStreet Tumblr account](#): Used to disseminate images, news, videos, and other content.

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