

Extinction Rebellion protesters occupy insurance firms insuring climate chaos

February 27, 2024 by Extinction Rebellion

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Images:

<https://show.pics.io/xr-global-media-breaking-news/search?collectionIds=65dc79b4f8be5e0b9304619b>

Extinction Rebellion activists today (Tuesday) occupied the offices of five major insurers in the heart of the City of London, including the iconic Walkie Talkie building, as the movement launches its week of action to stop the companies insuring climate chaos.

Teams of activists in business attire infiltrated the lobbies of the firms from 8.30am, outsmarting police and security, and staged a lobby occupation calling for company bosses to talk to them about the need to stop insuring new oil, coal and gas.

The buildings occupied are:

- **The Walkie Talkie – offices of Tokio Marine**
- **Leadenhall Street – offices of Probitas**
- **Threadneedle Street – offices of Talbot**
- **Creechurch Place – offices of Travellers**
- **Mark Street – offices of Zurich**

One of XR protesters Liz Pendleton said: “We wanted to engage constructively with insurance bosses about their decision to insure the fossil fuel crooks wrecking the climate.

‘A member of staff from Zurich did take a letter from XR to their CEO. But no-one from senior management at any of the companies we visited had the courage to talk to us. It seems they were too shy about their bad climate behaviour to actually face us and justify it.

“The insurance industry has a unique opportunity to immediately halt all the ‘carbon bomb’ projects like the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline and the West Cumbria coal mine that will cause climate breakdown and a future of killer storms and heatwaves, floods, famine and war.

“It’s very simple. No insurance equals no drilling. No insurance equals no digging. So these companies have a superpower that could give us all a fighting chance of a liveable future. Most of the insurance companies’ CEOs may not have responded to our letter, but we know that there are many good people working in these buildings, with friends and families they care about. They also don’t want this planet destroyed.

“We will continue trying to engage with these businesses in the hope that they will act before it’s too late.”

The occupations are part of a week of protest in the UK and across the world by climate activists. They came a week after Extinction Rebellion sent a letter [1] to more than 40 insurers in the City of London warning they could face targeted protests unless they met three demands, including a complete and immediate ban on insuring new and expanding oil, gas and coal projects, infrastructure and operations.

The occupying activists unfurled banners saying “Fossil Fuel Insurance is our Death Assurance” and “Insure our Future – not Fossil Fuels” and invited insurance workers to sit down and speak with them to talk through how the insurance industry can help insure our future.

Copies of XR’s ultimatum letter were handed into the reception desk with a polite invitation for insurance company bosses to meet activists in the lobby to discuss their decisions to continue to insure climate-wrecking fossil fuel projects.

Insurance workers and their bosses have also been invited to attend a community assembly on “How can the insurance industry move faster to slow climate breakdown?” on 5 March at 7pm. [2]

While the occupations were going on, a large group of protesters held a Fossil Fool Tour around the City, carrying broken umbrellas symbolising the insurance industry's failure to protect us, visiting the occupied buildings and supporting the activists inside.

One of the protesters, Polly Hallam, a student at London School of Economics, said: "I can't just stand by while these companies sit in their comfortable offices calmly issuing insurance policies that will result in destruction, displacement and death across the world. We've seen that insurance firms are capable of doing the right thing when they face protests. Many pulled out of climate-wrecking projects like the Cambo oil field in the North Sea under pressure from activists. We urge the companies we visit today to do the same."

Another protester Dr Lucy Hogarth, a member of Scientists for Extinction Rebellion, said: "Just 20 companies, many of which are based in the City of London, ensure 70% of fossil fuel projects. Examples such as Cambo in the UK and the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) have proven that the insurance industry will pull out of these projects when pressured [3]. I have joined the Insurance Week of Action to tell insurance companies that insuring fossil fuel extraction in 2024 is unacceptable. These companies are enabling destruction, displacement and death from the comfort of their headquarters."

Insurance companies are experts in risk and know precisely the threat that climate change and environmental destruction poses to us all, yet these companies continue to insure oil, gas, and even coal projects. Without insurance, major oil, gas and coal companies cannot operate.

Today's events were organised in solidarity with the Insure Our Future Global Week of Action which will see protests and actions carried out by climate groups, including XR, in the City of London and in cities and towns across the UK. There will also be actions in 24 countries around the world including the USA, France, Germany, Switzerland, Czechia, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Egypt, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, DRC, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, South Korea and Japan [4]

(Note to News Desks: at the time of writing some XR building occupations were still ongoing)