



The essential guide to a seamless plant shutdown in 6 phases

START EARLY: PLANNING BEGINS UP TO 6 MONTHS AHEAD

A successful plant shutdown is won or lost in the six months leading up to the stop date. Treating this lead time as a mandatory requirement is the only way to secure specialized labor and navigate the volatile lead times of critical components. Failure to initiate planning early creates a high-risk environment where "reactive troubleshooting" replaces strategic maintenance, inevitably leading to a domino effect of budget overruns and delayed restarts.

TECHNICAL INTEGRITY & RISK MITIGATION

Beyond simple logistics, this period is a non-negotiable window for auditing system health and regulatory standing. It is vital to identify aging electronic components approaching their 10 to 20-year safety lifespan—where failure is an imminent threat—before the outage begins. By aligning with your OEM early to address these hidden risks and obsolescence issues, you create a critical insurance policy against "scope creep" and ensure the technical integrity of the six-phase execution plan that follows.

How to plan a plant shutdown period

A checklist to maximize efficiency

1

Initiation & Preparation

Clear scope and early communication set the foundation:

- Define the shutdown scope: maintenance, inspections, repairs, or upgrades
- Review past service reports and open recommendations
- Engage OEMs early to leverage experience and system knowledge
- Identify obsolete or hard-to-source components
- Communicate shutdown dates and expectations to stakeholders

2

Safety & Compliance

Safety planning is critical to both people and performance:

- Review and update safety procedures
- Identify safe access needs such as manlifts and scaffolding
- Prepare lockout/tagout (LOTO) plans
- Ensure environmental and regulatory compliance

3

Planning & Scheduling

Detailed planning keeps work on track and minimizes downtime:

- Develop a task-level schedule with timelines
- Walk down work areas to assess access, interference, and constraints
- Identify critical path activities
- Secure permits for hot work, confined space entry, and other high-risk tasks
- Order spare parts, tools, and consumables in advance
- Review operator and engineering requests for improvements or upgrades

4

Execution Readiness

As the shutdown approaches, readiness becomes the priority:

- Confirm contractor availability and scope
- Finalize temporary access requirements
- Assign confined space watch resources
- Stage equipment and materials
- Test backup power and temporary lighting
- Establish waste handling and recycling plans

5

Shutdown Execution

Execution is where preparation pays off:

- Conduct a pre-shutdown safety meeting
- Isolate and de-energize equipment
- Perform planned maintenance, inspections, and upgrades
- Document completed work and deviations

6

Restart & Wrap-Up

A strong restart ensures long-term value:

- Perform system checks before restart
- Safely remove LOTO devices and restore power
- Conduct post-startup inspections
- Capture lessons learned
- Update maintenance records and compliance documentation