

White paper

# FM: Long-term building compliance after COVID-19



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## Introduction

The ongoing vaccination programme and the removal of all workplace restrictions has provided UK businesses with the opportunity to consider a post-pandemic world.

However, for many, emerging from the pandemic won't entail a simple return back to 'before'. The pandemic has left lasting change across the country – a legacy dubbed the 'new normal' that will continue to impact societies, businesses and the economy moving forward.

The facilities and estate management industry has a key role to play within this changing paradigm.

As people get used to life just over two years after the first lockdown, the ability of key economic and social hubs, such as the workplace, to accommodate the return of the masses will shape the lives of many in the months and years ahead.

Taking the right steps to ensure the seamless return of people to buildings, and their continued safety, is therefore paramount.

This white paper discusses the importance of safety in reopening and running sites, and the considerations that need to be taken in order to achieve compliance.

**Chapter 1** outlines some of the key areas of compliance that businesses should review prior to reopening, from HVAC and fire to electrical and water-related considerations, as well as the risks of failing to comply.

**Chapter 2** offers a five-point plan that can help to clarify the needs and priorities of an estate, create a management plan, and manage delivery of that plan.

**Chapter 3** considers the benefits of estate management beyond compliance and the importance of relationships in realising these, before discussing why estate management has a bright future.

## CHAPTER 1:

### Compliance After COVID

For both health-centric and legal reasons – which we will come onto later – compliance must underpin any site's ongoing management and/or reopening preparations.

Covering everything from ventilation, gas, fire, electrical, legionella and asbestos risks, key checks will have to be made in those buildings that have been left either entirely vacant or operating with reduced capacity during the pandemic period.

Reopening is not as simple as flicking a switch. In order to prioritise health and safety, avoid significant fines and prevent other potential reputational or financial damages, it's a process that must be well thought out, where the primary assumption is that all aspects are no longer compliant. While many places may have reopened to some extent, thanks to flexible, hybrid and remote working capabilities, the return to work will be gradual for many. Now is the perfect time to undertake a variety of building compliance related activities with minimal disruption to occupants.



Here are four major factors that estate managers need to consider.

#### 1 / HVAC



Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) is a primary port of call for any building looking to reopen.

Where the early stages of the pandemic saw significant concern about contracting COVID-19 via contaminated surfaces, it has since transpired that the disease is predominantly spread via airborne transmission. As a result, given the continued presence of COVID-19, air flow, air quality and proper ventilation are vitally important if workplace safety is to be optimised.

HVAC systems therefore must be assessed, adapted and enhanced in order to ensure they are providing appropriate protection. Key points to consider and check are:

- Sufficient ventilation should be maintained through all areas of the building.

- Windows should be left open wherever possible.
- High risk areas, such as regularly frequented and poorly ventilated spaces, should receive special attention.
- Air conditioning units should use fresh or filtered air as opposed to recirculated air.
- The type of air filters used may need to be altered to reduce virus transmission.
- Filters should be replaced at regularly advised intervals.
- Air quality protocols should be maintained two hours before and after occupancy.

The government has detailed guidance regarding [ventilation of indoor spaces](#), as well as guidance about [air conditioning inspections in buildings](#).



Compliance with government-defined fire safety regulations and building regulations is therefore vital.

## 2 / Fire



# 153,314

incidents of fire in the year ending September 2020

# 229

fire-related fatalities were recorded within this same period

While mitigating fire risks is not a new consideration, it continues to be one of the most important for facilities and estate management professionals.

Fire poses a real threat.

According to the [Home Office](#), rescue services in England attended 539,225 incidents in the year ending September 2020, with 153,314 of these having been fires. Further, 229 fire-related fatalities were recorded within this same period.

Compliance with government-defined fire safety regulations and building regulations is therefore vital. Key points to consider and check are:

- Regular fire risk assessments should be conducted.
- Fire alarms should be checked regularly and tested on a weekly basis.
- Existing fire safety policies should be reviewed, optimised and re-communicated.
- Fire safety drills should take place on a frequent basis.
- Each building should have designated fire safety personnel.
- Emergency exits and their appropriate routes should be both clearly signposted and unobstructed at all times.

### 3 / Water



Buildings that have been only partially used or left vacant for extended periods are also likely to pose major water-based health and safety risks.

Many workplace water systems are designed to be regularly flushed under the assumption that they will be regularly occupied. However, where such systems have been left for weeks or months at a time during the pandemic, bacteria may have been allowed to multiply.

Critically, this could result in the emergence of legionella – a bacterium that naturally occurs in freshwater that can cause a pneumonia-type illness called Legionnaires' disease.

Indeed, there has been an uptick in Legionnaires' disease. [Public Health England](#) reported that between January and October 2020 there were 295 confirmed cases, this figure having averaged at 165 for the same period

between 2017 and 2019.

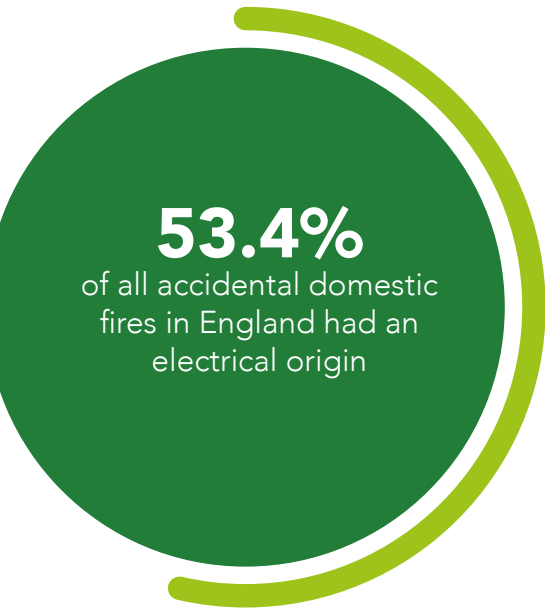
To prevent a building's water system from becoming contaminated with legionella and other harmful bacteria, it is important to take preventative action, both prior to and after reopening through:

- Turn on taps and flush toilets regularly to prevent water from becoming stagnant in a building's system.
- Keep pipe lengths as short as possible.
- Ensure boilers and pumps are functioning properly.
- Check for leaks in water systems.
- Treat water systems to kill potentially harmful bacteria such as legionella.
- Monitor conditions and avoid temperatures that promote bacteria growth.
- Follow guidance from [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#), [CIC/CIPHE](#), [TM13](#) and the [UK Government](#).



## 295

confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease between January and October 2020



**4 / Electrical** 

While electricity is a given necessity for any workplace building, the volts that power our everyday activities pose a series of risks, from electrical fires to electrocution.

According to [Electrical Fire Safety First](#), 53.4% (14,186) of all accidental domestic fires in England had an electrical origin in 2018/2019. [HSE](#), meanwhile, previously stated that there are around 1,000 reported accidents at work involving electric shock or burns annually, with roughly 30 of these being fatal.

As a rising number of individuals begin to reoccupy buildings that may have been left vacated for an extended period, it is vital to ensure electrical compliance to uphold safety. Here are some of the key things you need to know:

- The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 came into force on 1 June 2020 and apply to all tenancies created on or after that date in England from 1 July 2020.
- These new regulations require landlords to have all electrical installations inspected at least every five years, and tested by a person who is qualified and competent.
- Landlords have to provide a copy of the electrical safety report to their tenants as well as to the local authority if requested.
- A copy of that report should also be retained until the next inspection and test is due, where it should be provided to the person carrying out the next inspection and test.

See guidance from the [Electrical Contractors Association](#).

**Risks of failure to comply**

It is the responsibility of the facilities, building and estate managers to keep buildings compliant with the relevant regulations in each of these four key areas so that occupants and assets may be protected from a wide and varied spectrum of facilities-based risks.

[Failure to comply with health and safety legislation](#) in the workplace can have severe consequences including unlimited fines, disqualification from your industry, or even prison sentences.

- [According to HSE:](#)
- The average fine for non-compliance in 2019/20 was £110,000 per conviction.
  - For an SME, the average fine came to £106,984 whereas the cost of compliance was between £44,214 and £62,770.
  - For a small business (fewer than 50 staff) yearly compliance came to an average of only £6,687 – more than £100,000 less than the average fine.

Such statistics demonstrate the critical importance of being compliant, not only from a health and safety perspective, but equally from a financial and operational standpoint.

**1,000**  
reported accidents at work involving electric shock

The average fine for non-compliance in 2019/20 was  
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per conviction.

## CHAPTER 2:

## Simplifying estate management and compliance

With so many areas to consider, estate management can appear overwhelming. Throughout 2021 we ran free compliance health checks via video calls with interested companies. The overriding feedback we've had is that people are busy, find estate management too complicated and need someone to take the pain away.



On top of this, people responsible for buildings and estates that we spoke to are looking for partners that can simplify estate management and are easy to work with. This feedback has helped us to create a plan of action for achieving compliance as part of estate management.



### Five steps to comprehensive management

We understand that there are immense difficulties associated with being accountable for estate management without the tools, knowledge or expertise to accomplish your goals.

Many businesses will look to outsource to a large facilities management (FM) organisation with expertise in estate management. However, owing to factors such as cost, this isn't always an option for smaller and mid-sized companies.

For those that do choose to outsource, opting for a provider based purely on cost is ill-advised, with companies at risk of shelling out for a service that doesn't do justice to their estate. For those managing their estate themselves, meeting compliance measures can feel like an overbearing challenge that takes significant time; time which you feel could be spent on other activities that make positive contributions to the business.

We know it can feel like being stuck between a rock and a hard place. To help overcome some of the compliance-related complexity, here are five key considerations when managing your estate.



**1**  
**KNOW YOUR ASSETS**

According to Compare Soft, an effective asset register can have an impact on your revenue and cash flow by anywhere between five and 18 percent. An effective asset register will identify your assets – their location, condition, life span and economic value, leaving no stone unturned. It should also be updated on a regular basis, ensuring you are basing important estate management decisions on the latest available information.

a duty to protect their employees and customers. We advise you to:

- routinely inspect your compliance position
- check it against the latest legal guidance
- carry out compliance inspections and categorise remedial and improvement actions.

The end result is complete compliance, and making these actions routine will make remaining fully compliant far more straightforward.

partner can take the lead role in executing your priorities across one or multiple sites. This may extend to construction, design and management support, delivery of major upgrades and refurbishment work.

Underpinning this five-point plan should be a commitment to simplicity and accountability. Estate management need not be made overcomplicated. It all starts with being able to access and analyse the right information – get this step right, and the foundation is laid to implement the latter of the five aforementioned points.



**2**  
**UNDERSTAND YOUR CONDITION**

Evaluating the condition of an estate in detail is a daunting prospect. A reliable estate management partner can help by surveying your buildings, identifying construction and repair requirements, highlighting any risks and collating the data into user-friendly reports. Such reports should underpin the everyday maintenance activities on your estate.



**4**  
**PACKAGE YOUR PRIORITIES**

Getting ahead of the game is another way to make ongoing compliance fulfilment a less onerous task. This can include producing a plan up to five years in the future, forecasting CAPEX expenditure, balancing priorities versus statutory requirements and assisting with tender production. A reputable estate management partner can assist with this and will work to gain a full understanding of your estate in order to identify and address your priorities.

Furthermore, the ongoing condition of buildings and estates should be on the agenda of senior leaders and even those sitting on company boards. Facilities and estate management took on a leading role during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has a critical role to play in ensuring building and estate occupants and guests are kept safe – retaining a seat in leadership meetings and being viewed as a trusted voice will help this to happen. Indeed, sharing regular updates on estate management which explain what and why certain activities are occurring (in jargon-free language) will only help to maintain buy-in from key decision makers.



**3**  
**CONTROL YOUR COMPLIANCE**

The cost of health and safety fines is routinely higher than the cost of compliance. Businesses also have



**5**  
**MANAGE YOUR DELIVERY**

Planning and strategising means little if the execution of estate management activities are sub-optimal. Careful management of programme delivery is therefore paramount, and a reliable

**Simplify estate management without compromising on quality**

While estate management might seem daunting, it does not need to be difficult.

Just as organisations are looking to streamline, optimise and simplify their processes in almost every sector, these same improvements are equally possible with estate management. In making the right changes, you can reap the



rewards of a streamlined and cohesive approach.

Where the remit of estate management is extremely broad, the key opportunities lie in holistically reviewing an organisation's assets. In simplifying processes, an organisation becomes empowered to create an estate that not only reflects the business's culture, but equally feels like a home for its people.

Excellence in estate management requires strategic thinking and continuous evaluation of the estate. For those new to this approach, there is a big learning curve, but streamlining the process makes it accessible to all.

### Bring simplified estate management to life in your industry – case studies

The simplification of estate management is not exclusive either. It is a process that is widely accessible to businesses and properties spanning all industries, with various needs.

At IEM, we have experience supporting numerous industries in streamlining their approach to estate management (from aviation and automotive to chemical and retail, and many in between).

From a small fix to project managing a large estate, we've got you covered. Here's just some examples showing how we've helped businesses in a variety of different ways.



#### Listed building



- **Challenge:** There were several issues with the building controls within a listed building, and the client did not know where to begin.
- **Solution:** We assessed the building's current compliance position, checking it against the latest legal guidance and undertaking key inspections to categorise remedial and improvement actions.
- **Result:** The client was able to wash away all stress and uncertainty, while we were able to deliver clarity on the building's current position and implement a cost-efficient improvement plan.

#### Warehousing

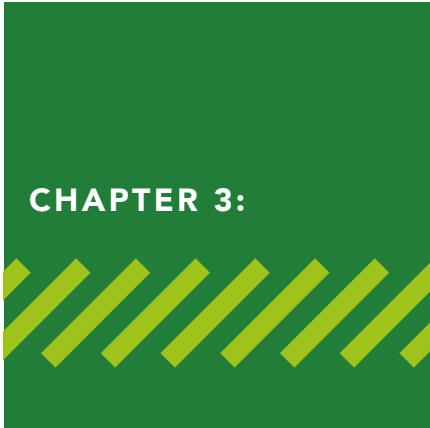


- **Challenge:** A warehouse was suffering from trade disruptions as a result of a number of large, dilapidated asbestos roofs leaking.
- **Solution:** IEM was consulted and put in charge of managing the asbestos removal and coordinating with all relevant stakeholders.
- **Result:** Through working with our trusted supply chain partners, works were delivered under cost, efficiently and with no disruption to the trade warehouses.

#### Automotive



- **Challenge:** A company commenced operations in a new building, where the immediate priority was to ensure building compliance.
- **Solution:** We assessed the building's current compliance position, checking it against the latest legal guidance and undertaking key inspections to categorise remedial and improvement actions.
- **Result:** Following this procedure, the building was provided with a path to becoming compliant and fully operational, with the project remedials having been delivered. The business was left well placed to use this new building to enable further growth.



## Long-term estate management

In considering what building regulatory compliance might entail, and the benefits of simplifying estate management compliance, we come to a key question: Is investing in estate management worth it?

With the right knowledge and/or support, estate management can be a powerful tool capable of providing a sound return on investment while futureproofing any business.

The key challenge is that the wrong approach is frequently taken with estate management. It is often a reactive process that is only considered after a problem has already occurred. For those that take a proactive approach in building resilience into assets, however, several positive outcomes can be generated. Through estate management investments, businesses gain an in-depth understanding of their estate – its strengths, its weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Those that don't, however, could be faced with non-compliance and in turn the risks that could result in a series of potential health-related hazards, fines and legal issues.

The benefits of estate management extend beyond

compliance, however. Once the basic checklist has been ticked off, attentions can be turned to increasing the value of assets. Real estate is valuable, and sites and premises therefore need to be viewed not simply in terms of hazards and potential problems, but equally in terms of their potential. Underutilised areas offer prime opportunities for redevelopment so that they may add value to an organisation through means such as enhancing overall productivity and revenue diversification.

### The benefits of estate management beyond compliance

Given the current landscape, that has been sideswept by the economic and social upheaval caused by the pandemic, portfolio optimisation has never been more important.

Ultimately, the workplace is changing. In the 'new normal', significant focus is being placed on adapting and creating workplaces that support the preferences, productivity and wellbeing of employees.

In order to adapt and futureproof facilities effectively, these changes must be embraced and accounted for as we emerge from the pandemic. Spaces should:

- Be designed to allow for agile working and changes in working style.
- Focus on the needs of the people using them.
- Encourage movement and creative work as well as safety.
- Reflect and encourage a strong workplace culture that promotes loyalty and keeps staff motivated and engaged.
- Incorporate sustainable practices that will save costs and improve brand reputation.

The role of the estate manager is not just responding to problems. In today's environment, they should be a creative force that maximises the potential of a site. Caring for estate management and building relationships in order to succeed in this role as effectively as possible, estate management professionals must be provided with the support and tools they require.

A business's relationship with its estate manager mustn't be transactional. To navigate the series of inevitable estate-related changes, from compliance enhancements to a shift in the use of facilities as companies adopt hybrid working models in the post-pandemic era, open, communicative, collaborative and transparent relationships are vitally important.

It is the responsibility of estate management professionals to not only ensure buildings are safe to reopen, but equally optimise facilities so that they may be more suitable for new ways of working. They must manage and communicate risks, and outline plans for improvement.

It's a balancing act that requires careful consideration. That is why all stakeholders must be able to work together to overcome the challenges associated with what may prove to be a long and unpredictable road ahead.

Estate managers should feel confident in explaining how and why they are managing various tasks, from compliance to lighting, and water safety to energy management, while business leaders must do all they can to support them in achieving their goals.

## Estate management has a bright future

Indeed, it is clear that estate management has a vital role to play in directing a transition from lockdowns and social distancing back into a 'new normal', or post-pandemic world.

Many uncertainties lie ahead. What will the world of work look like? How will facilities need to change in order to accommodate the long-term effects of the pandemic?

Answering such questions will be a gradual process based on informed decisions. Yet getting estate management right is critical if any business is to take the most effective, operationally savvy and cost-effective path in the long term.

Indeed, this once again demonstrates the importance of simplicity, and streamlined estate management.

According to [Reuters](#), one of the primary reasons FM businesses have struggled in recent years is the continuous hamster wheel of signing long fixed-rate contracts with unsustainable pricing.

Complicating the services offered to clients makes it easier to hide the real cost and mask the value customers are getting.

FM has been an industry unfortunately known for its acronyms and hidden costs; that's why there is a need for clarity and a much more simplistic approach.

The FM industry needs to understand the power of clarity and simplicity. Good FM companies will sell real features and services that customers genuinely need. If providers get this right and make it easier for customers to attain more value, the next 12-24 months could be one of the most exciting times in the industry's history.

Our vision is to "simplify the complexity of estate management", and we do this by making facilities simple, transparent and effective.

Indeed, getting estates up and running in a post-COVID world will bring challenges. But it will also bring many opportunities for estate management businesses to grow and for clients to build workplaces that will be business enhancers, not just cost centres.

### Making a difference at IEM

IEM entered the market to provide clients with a proactive and transparent approach to building maintenance, offering the technical expertise to provide the correct cost-effective solutions with consideration towards the client strategies and business goals. IEM's mission is to provide a partnering approach to maintenance, repairs and projects for buildings, enabling businesses to run smoothly and efficiently.

We understand how frustrating it is to control the risks and everyday challenges of managing multi-site estates - this takes time away from making the positive contribution to the business you truly want to.

IEM simplifies this complexity, allowing you to easily control the risks and turn your buildings into business enhancers.

Operating across many sectors, our support covers a nationwide area with fully accredited engineers, and our team has expertise in every facet of facilities management.

Our vision is to "simplify the complexity of estate management", and we do this by making facilities simple, transparent and effective.



We solve all your building maintenance challenges quickly, affordably and efficiently



#### **FIX**

We carry out all aspects of building maintenance creating a safe working environment for all your teams.



#### **ADVISE**

We provide technical support and expertise across all areas of your buildings.



#### **MANAGE**

We support your business by managing all aspects of your Building Maintenance.



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