The ability to operate in a safe and clean working environment is one of the primary challenges in operations and maintenance, especially after the impact of the 2020 global pandemic.

This five-step guide helps you understand how to rebuild a safe, productive, and compliant workplace with modern facilities management software.
5 steps to safe operations

Whilst most industries have successfully transitioned to new ways of working, the world awaits a much-anticipated return to ‘normal’. For businesses, reopening is not as simple as it once was, facilities management now means meeting heightened government requirements for cleaning, hazard and contamination management, and ultimately, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of employees and customers.

The 2020 global pandemic is redefining what it means to be “safe and clean”. Successful enterprises are working to stay ahead of the curve, embracing a new level of asset management to not only address official guidelines, but to minimise risk to employees and customers, strengthen organisational resilience and optimise analysis and reporting.

This 5-step guide helps you to understand how to rebuild a safe, productive, and compliant workplace.

Step 1:
Re-assess Risk

Step 2:
Review maintenance schedules

Step 3:
Amplify clean practices

Step 4:
Be ready for changing expectations

Step 5:
Move from preventive to prescriptive
Step 1: Re-assess Risk

Mitigating risk is crucial to business continuity

The changing risk profile of the global pandemic now redefines a critical asset. Teams need to re-evaluate all assets within the organisation, and align appropriate maintenance and management practices, not just with a lens of meeting government regulations, but to minimise risk to employees and customers.

Employees and customers need to feel safe

Whether you’re a retail worker or shopper, public transport commuter, or delivery driver: the triggers for feeling unsafe in a post-pandemic world have changed for all. Train carriages need to be visibly clean and socially distanced; holding on to handrails are a very conscious choice; seeing an operator without a mask is a cause for concern. This ultimately means some assets are now critical to ongoing service delivery and require new processes to ensure safety, compliance and business continuity.

• PPE for staff
• Social distancing
• Signage to customers

Staff should be guided to operate to a more concrete risk assessment and ranking process. This provides a formalised tool, that helps determine the risk of assets as measured against specific criteria. This allows users to assign a Risk Assessment Index (RAI) and score to assets. Criteria is defined by using decision trees and developing formulaic approaches to calculate the risk assessment score. Assigned score ranges determine which RAI should be applied, and therefore defining, when and what activities need to be applied.
Step 2: Review maintenance schedules

Reopening the doors on brick-and-mortar businesses that have remained empty for months, is not as simple as flicking on a switch. Particularly in today’s modern smart buildings: extended hibernation periods pose new challenges with HVAC systems having been powered down, stagnated water in pipes, and reduced building maintenance for prolonged periods. All of which need to be considered before employees return in limited or normal capacity. To add to that, with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidelines a mainstay in today’s new-norm, work instructions need to be updated to include PPE, and additional cleaning procedures, whilst maintaining clear, undisputed records.

Airplanes introduce new safety and wipe-down procedures

Shift changes in manufacturing now require more setup steps than before

Trains and buses implement safe distancing seating measures

Each industry faces their own unique set of regulations, but all businesses face a common hurdle: more tracking, monitoring, and post-mortem analysis of any contamination incident, from questions about maintenance frequency to employee education and qualification. The key is to be prepared with clear documentation, and records outlining health and safety practices.
Step 3: Amplify clean practices

In the post-pandemic era, pre-existing operations plans are now insufficient: cleaning and disinfectant protocols need to be increased and tracked. This new level of rigor enforced by governing bodies, is designed to enable business to restart operations, whilst minimising risk to employees, customers, and their families. It goes beyond traditional once-a-day cleaning regimes, and “employees must wash hands before returning to work” signs in the bathrooms—to stringent new procedures that reduce risk of contamination. These include increasing and documenting cleaning and disinfectant schedules, implementing social distancing, and adding HR policies that outline, qualify, and audit employee behaviours. ¹

Everyone from field technicians to janitorial staff to IT personnel need to follow consistent practices. Manual and paper recordkeeping are prone to errors and not rigorous enough to meet these new standards. Instead, the time is right for automated maintenance checklists and workflows that provide necessary maintenance tracking. Staff scheduling, training, and manager signoffs should also be digitised and integrated with specific information on staff skill sets, training, and qualifications.

¹ Refer to your government guidelines for additional information
Step 4:
Be ready for changing expectations

To ensure continuity, organisations need to be ready to adapt and change to the evolving situation; to be able to comply with government regulations, but also with what customers and employees expect in order to feel safe. To achieve this, businesses need to consider ways to improve visibility of assets for compliance, streamline maintenance processes to accelerate response time to hazards and other incidents, and develop real-time reporting for ongoing monitoring.

Businesses should seek access to real-time data. This will ensure limited resources are directed to projects of greatest need, minimising the risk of assets becoming detrimental to health and wellbeing, or impacting service delivery.

Having real-time reports and data on workplace safety adherence is imperative. These reports should include:

- Procedures in place
- Implementation timelines and real-time reports of adherence
- Records of staff trainings and certifications
- Hazardous materials and activities and how those are being mitigated and avoided
Step 5: Move from preventive to prescriptive

An asset management system that can adapt to a rapidly changing environment needs to integrate across facilities, and include environmental controls, CAD, supply chain, and any other relevant systems. This enables access to rapid, quality, and accurate condition data.

A digitised system enables smart technologies that apply key analytics and can overlay the system with historical elements such as failure analysis, repair codes, warranty definitions, and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) expectations and strategies. This allows a shift from a preventive mindset to predictable and prescribed safe and clean practices.

Conclusion: Safe and clean in the cloud

Today's organisations need an agile infrastructure to maintain leadership in a competitive and often unpredictable environment. Cloud-based enterprise software provides businesses with the kind of nimble platform that enables quicker responses to opportunities, customer needs, and a rapidly changing business environment.

Cloud deployment also facilitates complete automation and integration across the enterprise and supports the implementation of future-forward innovations such as mobility, A.I. and drone technologies. As organisations continue to build data-rich repositories of business-critical information, cloud storage also offers optimum data safety and security.

Every organisation is ready to get back to work, but we know that markets will perform differently, and more challenges are sure to emerge. Now is the time to focus on the processes, methods, and procedures that create a reliable, sustainable, and scalable asset management infrastructure, no matter what lies ahead.
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