

Facilities Management from A to Z



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H_{ealth}

Health and Safety is a critical area for all organisations for a range of compliance, employee care and commercial reasons and is one in which the facility manager plays a major part. A great deal of emphasis is placed on safety and rightly so. With 140,000 workplace accidents reported to the HSE in 2007 and 241 people killed at work, safety is serious business.

However workplace health is an even bigger issue. The Health and Safety Commission report that around 2.2 million people suffered from an illness caused or made worse by their current or past occupation in 2006-07. While workplace injuries have reduced, UK plc still loses 30 million working days a year due to ill health.

Health issues like allergies, asthma and infection account for a lot of these illnesses and poor maintenance and cleaning regimes can be a major contributory factor. Back pain can be caused by a poorly configured workstation, eyesight problems from lighting and hearing problems by noise. Stress, depression and anxiety are the cause of more working days lost than any other work-related illness. A stressful working environment caused by poor design, overcrowding or inadequate support systems is frequently listed as one of the causes of stress.

The health aware facility manager will build wellness strategies into their operation. Healthy eating campaigns can be very effective in reducing sick absence. Where catering facilities exist a nutrition policy can be developed with information and awareness raising activities to support the policy. Even where there is no staff restaurant some organisations provide information and discounts for healthy food at nearby catering outlets, organise a weekly fruit order from a local greengrocer or simply display information on healthy eating or recipes.

Other employers may be keen on promoting healthy activities such a cycling to work or providing gymnasium or sporting facilities. Where the FM is involved in managing such facilities these may require specialist grounds care or equipment maintenance. It is important to ensure that staff can utilise the opportunity safely and that appropriate supervision and insurance cover is available.

Occupational Health is an area where the facilities manager must work closely with the Human Resources department. A collaborative approach that doesn't just respond to problems that arise but actively targets the reduction of sick absence can be a highly effective contributor to organisational success.

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health IOSH has lots of useful advice and information on its website www.iosh.co.uk