

Facilities Management from A to Z



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Jury Service

Jury service is one of the most important civic duties that anyone can be asked to perform. Jurors consider the evidence presented in a case and apply their common sense to decide whether or not the defendant is guilty.

A facility manager or any team member may receive a summons for jury service. If a member of staff is summoned, they must not be dismissed or treated unfairly. Such a dismissal would be classed as unacceptable by an employment tribunal, even if the employee concerned did not have a year's continuous service.

Jurors usually try serious criminal cases, such as murder, assault, burglary or fraud. These trials take place in the Crown Court. Less often, jurors try civil trials for things like libel when they are likely to serve in the High Court or a county court. They can also be asked to act in a coroner's court.

If there is a genuine reason why someone who has been summoned cannot attend for jury service when summoned, they can apply to have their jury service deferred, or to be excused from it altogether. Deferrals may be granted for things like holidays, sickness or even examinations. Grounds for being excused completely might include poor command of the English language or certain religious grounds. Anyone who has performed jury duty during the previous two years before the summons can be excused service on request.

The summoning office does consider requests sympathetically, balancing individual circumstances with the court's need for a representative jury. Requests can, however, be refused if no good reason is given. Inconvenience to the running of an FM operation or any other function is not a legitimate reason for excusal. In certain circumstances, a line manager may support the individual's case for deferment if necessary. However, if it is solely a question of inconvenience, there is nothing a facility manager can do to prevent an individual member of staff being called to attend for Jury Service.

Employees on jury duty do not have to be paid, unless this is specifically written into their employment contract, despite this many employers do make such payments. Expenses and allowances can however be claimed from the court for travel, subsistence and financial loss and some employers take this into account

Jurors are normally asked to serve for a period of ten working days and during that time may sit on more than one case. If a trial takes longer, the jury is expected to sit for the whole of the trial, however they will be told about the length of the trial at the start. If there are any exceptional circumstances which prevent someone from serving for a longer period of time they should tell the court before sitting on the jury panel.

*Guidance for employers and those called for jury service is available from the HM Court Service
Website www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/infoabout/jury_service*