

# Facilities Management from A to Z

Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard  
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## **T**emperature

Facility managers know that no subject generates more heat in the workplace than complaints about the temperature. While occupiers frequently cite legislation regarding minimum and maximum temperatures the truth is that many other factors including air movement, the nature of the work being carried out and individual physiognomy all have a big role to play in personal thermal comfort.

The legislation itself is not as clear cut as people would like to think. Under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, an employer has a general duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees. Explicit requirements for workplace temperatures appear in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations SI 1992/3004.

Regulation 7 states that during working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall “be reasonable” and that the heating system must not produce “injurious or offensive fumes, gas or vapour”. Also, that a “sufficient number” of thermometers shall be provided to enable persons at work to determine the temperature in any workplace inside a building.

Practical advice on compliance is given in an associated Approved Code of Practice which includes mention of minimum temperatures. Normally workrooms, which are defined as “a place where a room where people normally work for more than short periods,” should have a temperature of at least 16°C unless much of the work involves severe physical effort, in which case the temperature should be at least 13°C.

No maximum temperature is specified, though where the workroom temperature would otherwise be “uncomfortably high” all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a “reasonably comfortable” temperature. These steps might include air conditioning, fans, shading windows or siting workstations as far away as possible from heat sources.

What constitutes a reasonably comfortable temperature is of course highly subjective. The HSE guidance publication, Thermal Comfort in the Workplace says: “An acceptable zone of thermal comfort for most people in the UK lies roughly between 13°C and 30°C with acceptable temperatures for more strenuous work activities concentrated towards the bottom end of the range, and more sedentary activities towards the higher end.”

The 30°C figure in the guidance is often quoted but has no force in law. HSE’s current guidance is based on assessing the number of people who feel uncomfortable. The advice is that if the proportion of the workforce complaining of discomfort reaches a significant level, the manager needs to conduct a risk assessment and possibly take action.

HSE guidance sets out how to carry out an assessment of the risk to workers’ health from working in hot or cold environments. The FM needs to look at environmental factors such as ambient sunlight and temperatures, but they must also consider personal factors such as the level of physical activity, the amount and types of clothing and the duration of exposure.

*The Health and Safety Executive has a whole section on its website dedicated to temperature related issues*  
[www.hse.gov.uk/temperature](http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature)