

Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
published monthly in Facilities by Lexis Nexis between 2008 and 2016

W inter

Winter is a difficult season for facility managers. A combination of shorter days, inclement weather and their effects upon people seems to make looking after a property portfolio twice as difficult as it is during the summer. When creating an annual facilities plan and budget it makes good sense to take account of this simple fact.

Fewer daylight hours combined with unpredictable weather reduces the amount of time available for external fabric and grounds maintenance so planned activity schedules must take this into account. Alternative activities may need to be identified for external staff to avoid underutilisation. An alternative approach is the use of annualised hours contracts to provide resource flexibility.

Extreme weather can have a big impact on the management of buildings and the operation of businesses. A bad storm can damage roofs, cause water penetration or uproot trees around the site. Flooding can cause serious damage to furniture and fittings as well as disrupting productivity within the organisation, while frozen pipes can lead to building service failure or worse. Actions can be taken to minimise bad weather impact such as ensuring that drains and gutters are clear or pre-winter inspections of fabric integrity and insulation.

Snow and ice may look nice on Christmas greeting cards but can play havoc with public transport, car parking and building access and egress. Subscribing to an early waning service and stocking up well in advance with grit, barrier mats and snow shifting equipment can reduce the impact as long as swift action is then taken on the day.

Heating is a perennial problem in the winter months. Ensuring that plant is operating at peak efficiency and that leaks and draughts have been resolved will reduce the number of complaints. Heating operating times may need to be adjusted to ensure that the premises reach the desired level for the start of the working day.

Contingency plans may also be required to deal with power cuts or influenza epidemic. Accident rates traditionally increase during the winter months which may impact on the availability of facilities service resources. Generators must be regularly tested on full load and adequate stocks of fuel maintained.

Winter is a difficult season for facility managers but good planning and prudent housekeeping can protect them from unexpectedly high expenses and many other winter related problems.

The Met Office has a subscription service for their severe weather warnings and a host of useful data on their website concerning seasonal weather patterns. See www.metoffice.gov.uk