

Prepare your workplace for Covid-19

By [Martin Smith](#)

15 May 2020

The Covid-19 global pandemic has triggered unprecedented disruption, impacting organisations across the world. We are acutely aware of the gravity of the situation we find ourselves in as a result. Our workplaces enable us to be productive and economically active, but now pose profound risks to the health and safety of our employees and our continuous business operation.



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With the latest Covid-19 crisis on hand, there will be an increased emphasis on the design and operation of buildings for occupant health and well-being. So how can property owners respond to this challenge and best prepare their workplaces under such circumstances? We take an in-depth look at what property owners can do to prepare themselves and protect their employees:

Understand your business occupancy needs

Full occupancy is unlikely to be possible in the short term and possibly even beyond that. Given the tough economic time we look to be facing, some businesses will scale down on space and increase working from home. For some, their business continuity will depend on saving costs, whilst having a productive workforce, even if that means from home. Your employees would have been 'shocked' into new ways of working, and that changes what is possible going forward. For landlords, this scenario may change the space needs of occupants and require a change in building management technology and practices.



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Diagnose your building's infection routes

The virus is understood to spread through multiple infection routes, including surface contact, macro droplets, micro droplets and other contamination spreaders in your building, such as your sewer systems. To get to grips with the risks within your building, a comprehensive diagnostic is needed of staff behaviours, organisational processes and the building itself. The physical operations are as important as the technology, including ventilation, air-conditioning, control systems, water and sewerage systems. All these components contribute to the functioning of the building and serve as infection routes.

Prepare immediate, medium- and long-term response plans that align

The aim is to try and find practical solutions that close the gap between your business needs and the risk of infection. These include operational processes and controls and building physical and technological improvements, along with emergency procedures and awareness. The challenge here is not to have a knee-jerk response with short-term actions, but to systematically reduce risk in a manner that is affordable and makes sense in the short and long term.

To help respond to Covid-19 risks, we have drawn from our extensive multi-disciplinary experience to develop Aurecon's Building Health Assessment Tool. The tool assists property owners in taking a systematic, balanced approach to find an optimal solution to minimise the health risk of their buildings.

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