

Rebuild a safe and compliant workspace

Best practice guide

infor

The ability to operate in a safe and clean working environment is one of the primary challenges in operations and maintenance, especially after the impact of the 2020 global pandemic.

This five-step guide helps you understand how to rebuild a safe, productive, and compliant workplace with modern facilities management software.

5 steps to ensure safe, clean operations

Healthy, safe production environments, facilities, and operations have always been a priority across industries. However, the 2020 global pandemic is redefining what it means, exactly, to be “safe and clean.” This new normal means organizations and businesses must evolve and adjust to meet increasing regulatory scrutiny and a heightened focus on clean practices.

However fluid the current situation and regardless of the existence or lack of official guidance, a successful enterprise should be working to stay ahead of the curve, taking steps to prepare for whatever is next. This means embracing a new level of systemized asset management that continues to meet the highest standards of safety and cleanliness practices, analysis, and reporting.

This five-step guide helps you to understand how to rebuild a safe, productive, and compliant workplace with modern facilities management.

Step 1:

Ensure clean practices by staff

Step 2:

Update preventive maintenance schedules

Step 3:

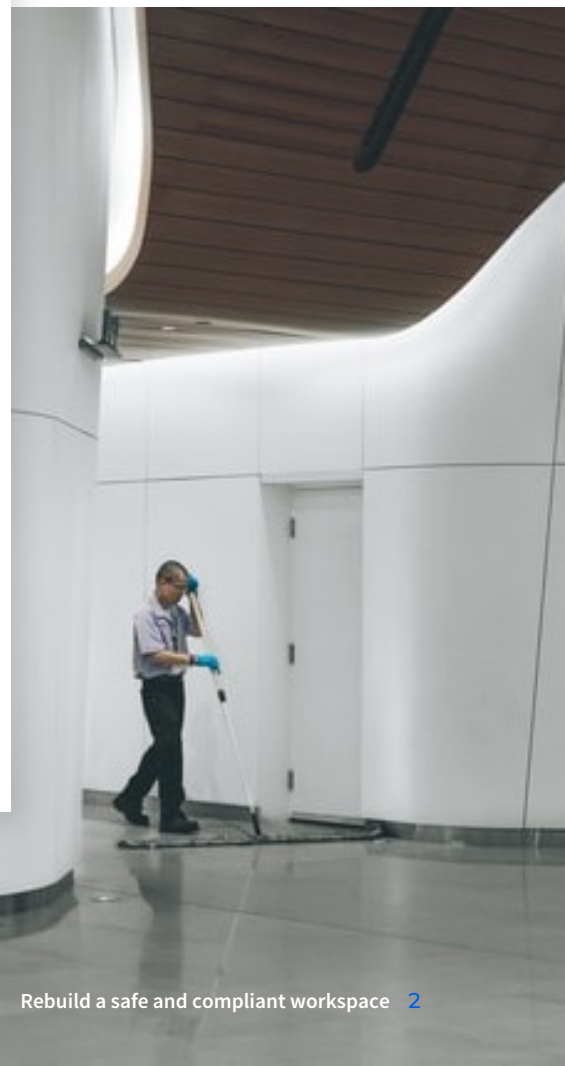
Identify assets at risk

Step 4:

Be ready for changing expectations

Step 5:

Move from preventive to prescriptive



Step 1:

Ensure clean practices by staff

Creating and communicating clean operation protocols are not enough to ensure employees are putting plans into practice. Yet today, adhering to safety procedures has never been more crucial. Anything less than 100% compliance is unsafe—and unacceptable. It is too easy to introduce a foreign contaminant into the operation, often unknowingly, compromising employee health and risking irreparable damage to organizational reputation. At the same time, regulatory agencies are issuing new guidelines on an almost-daily basis.¹

Imagine working in the food and beverage industry, as a maintenance technician responsible for the setup, breakdown, cleaning, configuration, and reconfiguration of the manufacturing cells used to produce the products sold. Prior to the pandemic, “safe and clean” operation to perform these functions was a straightforward set of procedures, but not as detailed as they may need to be now. Are there new disinfecting protocols? Are there signoffs required to confirm that the correct procedures were done? This new level of required rigor goes beyond the “employees must wash hands before returning to work” sign in bathrooms. It will become part of new potential HR policies that outline, certify or qualify, and audit employee behaviors. There may even be a need to create education prerequisites for returning to the post-pandemic era work environment.

Everyone from field technicians to janitorial staff to IT personnel needs to follow consistent practices. Manual and paper recordkeeping are prone to errors and not rigorous enough to meet these new standards. Instead, the time is right for automated maintenance checklists and workflows that provide necessary maintenance tracking. Staff scheduling, training, and manager signoffs should be also be digitized and integrated with specific information on staff skill sets, training, and qualifications.



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Step 2:

Update preventive maintenance schedules

End-to-end preventive maintenance processes are the key to creating environments that are both safe and clean—two criteria that don't always go hand in hand. Imagine HVAC filters being replaced by a coughing or sneezing employee who is not wearing a mask. Or a gloveless tech repairing a drinking fountain filter. What was formerly a minor contamination concern can suddenly prove to be catastrophic.

New maintenance schedules for “safe and clean” operation are likely to include a new set of work qualifications and operating conditions. Preventive maintenance (PM) cleaning procedures and approaches will change, with updated protocols for PM execution—technicians and operators now required to wear various forms of PPE, for example—as well as new materials required in a PM action than were used prior to the pandemic, and more frequent equipment cleaning.



New York City MTA has moved to an “Every 24 hour” policy for rail car disinfecting



Airplanes now require new wipe-down procedures between flights



Shift changes in manufacturing now require more setup steps than before

Organizations can expect more tracking, monitoring, and post-mortem analysis of any contamination incident, from questions about maintenance frequency to employee education and qualification. For example, organizations such as the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) have issued new guidelines around flushing and heating systems, dictating more routine review of preventive maintenance practices.² We will see more of that kind of oversight across industries as the pandemic situation evolves. Organizations need to be ready with the documentation and records outlining their own health and safety practices.

Step 3:

Identify assets at risk

Implementing a comprehensive asset management system is not an all-or-nothing endeavor. In fact, prioritization of key assets is crucial to mitigating risk.

Identifying the most critical assets means having a sense of situational awareness around the primary physical resources that support safe and efficient business operations. For example, in a casino environment, the priority systems are air conditioning and ventilation. If those are not optimized, not only does revenue suffer but also, more critically, the property becomes at risk of contamination or other health hazards, putting guests—and their business—at major jeopardy. In transportation, it's all about the equipment that keeps people moving, safely and on time, which can call for something as fundamental as regular wheel inspections.

Under this new safe and clean mandate, do you really know which of your assets are at risk?

Prior to this, if you were in Transit/Transportation, to identify risk you'd quickly start thinking about the usual suspects—tires, the heating and cooling system, and the engine, for example. Post-pandemic, how has that changed? Well, for one, you'll need to think more about the cabin areas—both operator and passenger cabins.

- **Are they clean?** -----
- **When were they cleaned last?** -----
- **Who cleaned them?** -----
- **Were cleaning personnel trained on new regulations?** -----

The same could be true of hotels: With new safe and clean operation protocol in place, are rooms being cleaned by people who know how to clean them according to new requirements, and can their action history be traced?

Aside from this softer look at critical systems, staff should convene around a more concrete reliability ranking process. Tools that help determine the risk of assets as measured against specific criteria typically allow users to assign a Risk Assessment Index (RAI) and score to assets. Criteria is defined by using decision trees and developing formulaic approaches to calculate the risk assessment score. Assigned score ranges determine which RAI should be applied.



Step 4:

Be ready for changing expectations

Maintenance organizations are continuously confronted with health, safety, and environmental regulations. That's nothing new. We are all familiar with the fact of regulations mandated by agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the U.S., the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) in Europe, the FDA for such areas as pharmaceuticals and food processing, and the Joint Commission (JACHO) and CMS Guidelines for healthcare.

Imagine life in a hospital prior to the pandemic. Now imagine that life in the new normal of the post-pandemic era. Do you think HVAC systems will be managed the same way? What about those in the surgery centers, emergency rooms, or ICU/CCU? Are there new policies within even the Board of Nursing that may require education, qualification, and adherence practices that were not available prior to the pandemic?

Although groups like OSHA, EPA, and DHEC provide cross-industry governance, there may be new guidelines to consider that are more industry-specific. Either way, operation according to these guidelines needs to become the foundation, not the goal. The goal should always rise above and beyond the measures stated in external regulations.

What we need to be ready for is more guidance, oversight, and perhaps unplanned visits from inspectors and auditors. Having real-time reports and data on safety and cleaning adherence is imperative. Such reports should include:



Procedures in place



Implementation timelines and real-time reports of adherence



Records of staff trainings and certifications



Hazardous materials and activities and how those are being mitigated and avoided



Step 5:

Move from preventive to prescriptive

An asset management system that can adapt to a rapidly changing environment needs to integrate across facilities, and include environmental controls, CAD, supply chain, and any other relevant systems. This enables access to rapid, quality, and accurate condition data.

A digitized system enables smart technologies that apply key analytics and can overlay the system with historical elements such as failure analysis, repair codes, warranty definitions, and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) expectations and strategies. This allows a shift from a preventive mindset to predictable and prescribed safe and clean practices.

Conclusion: Safe and clean in the cloud

Today's organizations need an agile infrastructure to maintain leadership in a competitive and often unpredictable environment. Cloud-based enterprise software provides businesses with the kind of nimble platform that enables quicker responses to opportunities, customer needs, and rapid changes.

Cloud deployment also facilitates complete automation and integration across the enterprise and supports the implementation of future-forward innovations such as mobility, A.I., and drone technologies. As organizations continue to build data-rich repositories of business-critical information, cloud storage also offers optimum data safety and security.

Every organization is eager to get back to work, but we know that markets will perform differently, and more challenges are sure to emerge. Now is the time to focus on the processes, methods, and procedures that create a reliable, sustainable, and scalable asset management infrastructure, no matter what lies ahead.



Citations

¹ [COVID-19-Related Guidance Documents for Industry, FDA Staff, and Other Stakeholders. US Food and Drug Administration. May 14, 2020](#)

² [ASHRAE offers COVID19 Building Readiness Guidance, ASHRAE, May 2, 2020](#)



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