

FM needs are being shaped by climate change

3 years ago



Brij Thankey, CEO at [Precision FM](#), explains why Facilities Management companies need to constantly look at ways they can improve how the buildings they manage operate, which in turn can have a positive impact on the lives of those who work and visit them.

The company philosophy at Precision FM has increasingly been to try to incorporate more green solutions into its business plans and build climate change resilience strategies into the conversations they are having with clients.

Climate change, what is it?

Climate change, [says National Geographic](#), is a prolonged global or regional shift in weather behaviour. Often, the concept relates to the increase in world temperatures from the middle of the last century to the current day.

The impacts of climate change differ depending on geographic area, but broadly its implications involve:

- Increasing temperatures
- Higher sea levels
- Prolonged frost-free spells
- Changing rainfall trends
- Increased heat flashes and drought

Although the global community is adopting different measures to limit climate change, we must confront

how this phenomenon impacts our everyday existence, particularly given that the implications are likely to be present for many years.

We strongly believe that FM companies have an essential role to play here. Buildings can help curb carbon use. More efficient building materials and proven building management methods provide various affordable opportunities to reduce carbon emissions and can have a wider environmental impact.

The introduction of intelligent technology to lessen the ecological effects on premises has been a positive development.

Think about the enormous effect that electricity has on our environment. Smart appliances consume far less power. Devices such as LEDs draw minimal electricity and thus generate little waste. Precision FM follows the evolution of this technology with zest, for instance, smart sockets and responsive light fittings.

Other significant energy-saving benefits of smart appliances include timers, remote control devices and automated shutdown. Units need no longer be kept powered on when not in use, instead, they can tell when no one is around, for example the office is empty and requires no lighting.

Responsive lighting can be further segmented so that only meeting rooms that are occupied are lit.

However, it is not sufficient to simply alleviate the sources of climate change. With our climate increasingly unpredictable, incorporating resilience is next.

Organisations might figure that implementing new policies to address climate change will cost them extra.

Resilience is the key

Tackling climate change issues in building management involves investigation and careful planning. Since weather patterns are distinct and climate change effects differ by locations, there is no single solution.

We believe that the starting point is to conduct a vulnerability analysis. As facilities managers, we know our properties' operations and understand how our clients work so are well placed to be able to assess how these different buildings and sites would deal with the impact of, for example, severe weather and note any shortfalls or areas of vulnerability.

It is also important to monitor any emerging legislation regarding building resilience or funding to support environmental initiatives.

While the specific solutions for your building will vary based on your location and the facility's demands, below are a few universal ideas to improve resiliency in the areas of power use and water conservation.

Energy optimisation

Since one of the primary drivers of climate change is greenhouse gas pollution, it is no wonder that improving power consumption is a key concern in building resilience and durability.

Regarding sustainability, installing IoT solutions can help reduce energy use in buildings by improving how energy is used. The less power you consume, the more robust you will be if you are disconnected from the

electricity network.

Incorporating Building Management Systems with FM technology to lower power usage is already becoming standard procedure.

Alarms initiated by building management software can be directly sent to the FM company's network, and a facility technician automatically assigned to the call. In conjunction with room reservation services, conference areas and offices can be fully automated, so they are only powered when used.

By doing so, the burden of resource stewardship can be split between the FM department and the property owners, resulting in lower emissions and reduced costs.

Other steps that could be considered are the deployment of renewable energy technology such as installing solar energy solutions to generate reserve electricity. The crux of the issue is decreasing a building's reliance on a single power source.

Water conservation

Climbing temperatures and increased heat spells enhance the probability of droughts, turning water conservation into a critical component of building resilience. In drought situations and with less water supply, a structure with less water dependence and a water recycling plan becomes inherently more resilient.

Much like power optimisation and utility performance measures, addressing your property's water needs and usage is another opportunity to make it more resistant to a changing climate. Introducing water recycling strategies to your facility makes it more sustainable in the event of water shortages.

Other water use ideas include employing storage tanks to collect and retain water for irrigation in the summer and cutting back on the use of water-hungry cooling equipment. Even adapting the landscaping used around the site, switching to a planting scheme using drought tolerant plants can play a key role in water conservation without impacting on the overall aesthetic of the site.

Setting an example

There's no time to be ignorant to the reality of climate change. Facilities management is about responding to issues and finding creative ways to solve problems. It's our job to be at the forefront of solutions for improving buildings' abilities to cope with weather changes.

"We can't solve climate change alone but we can do our bit as part of the global community to help reduce its negative impacts for the good of all."