

5 Top Tips to Stay Cool in The Office, as UK Temperatures Set to Reach 34°C

3 hours ago



The UK is braced for another scorching spell, with temperatures expected to climb as high as 34°C by Monday. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has issued amber heat health alerts across the East of England, London, the South East and the South West, with yellow alerts in place for the East and West Midlands, running until 8pm on Tuesday 23 June.

This is the second amber alert of the year, following a record-breaking heatwave back in May - and experts are warning it won't be the last, with some predicting we could see similar sizzling temperatures well into July and August, thanks to the potential of a super El Niño warming the Pacific Ocean.

This weather phenomenon has previously coincided with some of the warmest years the UK has on record - and this year is set to be no different, with British Weather Services meteorologist, Jim Dale, warning temperatures could jump up to 40°C this summer.

Rising temperatures

Sure, this kind of heat is all well and good when we're outdoors enjoying the sunshine, but what about when the joy of the weekend comes to a close and the 44% of UK workers still making the daily commute to the office find themselves back behind their desks? For facilities managers, that means building temperature and ventilation are firmly back in focus, with more hot weather expected over the coming months. Recently, government advisors have been calling for the UK to set maximum working temperatures to help protect employees from extreme heatwaves like this one. They also recommend an immediate focus is brought to the rollout of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in schools and hospitals, as a top priority.

While we wait for this call to be taken seriously, here are a few top tips – from Mike England, UK Rental Manager and HVAC expert at Daikin Rental Solutions, and Tina Loveland, Senior Designer at Appeal Shading – on how to keep cool, especially as we head back into a significantly hotter office this summer.

1. Close your windows

Counterintuitive as it sounds, throwing every window open during a heatwave is one of the most common mistakes people make.

“Keep windows closed and blinds drawn between 11am and 3pm, when outside temperatures peak,” Mike advises. “Open everything up early in the morning and again in the evening once the air outside has cooled. Buildings tend to hold heat through the day, so what you do first thing has a huge knock-on effect by mid-afternoon.”

“During a UK heatwave, outdoor temperatures can stay above 30°C from mid-morning until early evening,” Tina adds. “If your home is sitting at 24 or 25 degrees, opening a window will actually just let hotter air in.”

2. Switch off the lights

Most people overlook the fact that artificial lighting – especially older fluorescent and halogen fittings – generates a significant amount of heat. On a hot day, your lighting could be quietly pushing the temperature up by several degrees.

LEDs produce a fraction of the heat of traditional bulbs and use less energy on top of that. This is one of those changes that pays for itself quickly and makes a noticeable difference to how warm a room feels. Incandescent bulbs release around 90% of their energy as heat, while LEDs convert around 90% into light, with only 10% wasted as heat. A University of Michigan study also found that LED lighting is up to 44% more efficient than fluorescent tubes, making the switch one of the simplest and most cost-effective steps you can take.

3. Ditch the electric fans

“Fans move air around, but they don’t actually lower the temperature of a room,” says Mike. “You can end up just circulating warm air around, which can make it more uncomfortable for everyone, rather than cool.” For buildings without a permanent air conditioning system, hiring a portable air cooler is a far more effective solution. Rental is a smart option for businesses that only need serious cooling for a few weeks each year. You get the right equipment scaled to your space, without a major capital outlay.

4. Turn off unnecessary tech

Computers, monitors, printers and servers all generate heat and most people have far more equipment switched on than they need at any given time. Switching off monitors, printers and any equipment you’re not actively using is a surprisingly effective way to reduce ambient temperature.

This is especially true of offices. According to research, plug loads from office equipment account for between 20% and 50% of a building’s total energy use, making them a significant but easily overlooked contributor to indoor temperature.

“Server rooms are often the single biggest heat source in an office building and are worth addressing separately with proper cooling, rather than letting that heat bleed out into the rest of the space,” Mike recommends.

5. Rearrange the room

Proximity to sun-facing windows can make an enormous difference to how hot an individual feels throughout the day, yet the majority of us never think to account for this when designing our interiors.

If you’re sitting directly in the path of afternoon sun through west-facing windows, you’re going to be significantly hotter than if you sat a few metres away: obvious when you think about it!

“Once sunlight has passed through a window and converted to heat inside a room, you’re fighting a losing battle,” Tina comments. “Blinds and shutters intercept that heat before it reaches your living space — which is proven to actually reduce heat build-up. “A quality fitted blind on a sun-facing window can cut solar heat gain by 40-70 per cent. Light-coloured or reflective fabrics work best — they bounce the energy back through the glass rather than absorbing it into the room. Dark blinds, by contrast, absorb heat and can actually make things worse.”

Something as simple as rearranging chairs, adding a shade or blind to the worst-affected windows, or creating a cool-zone in a shadier part of the room, can help make a big difference.

With a record-breaking summer on the cards, there has never been a better time to get ahead of the heat. A few smart changes now could make all the difference when the temperature spikes.