



# COVID-19 AND THE FACILITY MANAGER

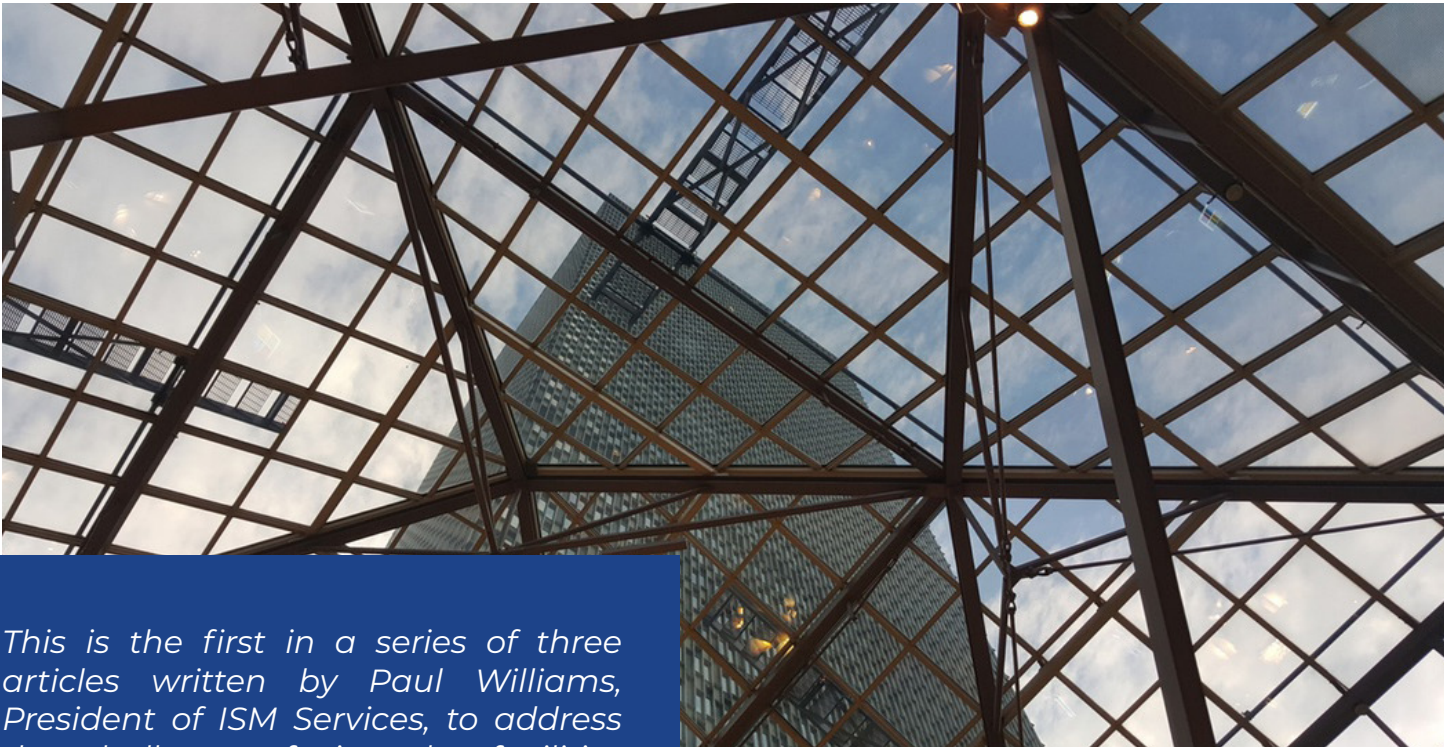
Operations and Maintenance

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*This is the first in a series of three articles written by Paul Williams, President of ISM Services, to address the challenges facing the facilities manager as the result of COVID-19. This article deals with Operations and Maintenance. The next two will deal with Human Capital and Security.*

## OVERVIEW

The response to COVID-19 has placed organizations in positions that they have never been in before. Never before have we seen such widespread measures used in an attempt to slow the spread of a virus. It has disrupted the vast majority of businesses, crippled the economy, and placed incredible pressures on facility managers across the globe

Many buildings are closed. Many that remain open are operating under reduced hours and at reduced capacity. This is affecting all industries and facility types.

Environmental, Health, and Safety is being forced to the forefront and is receiving laser-like focus from the C-suite.

Operations and maintenance of facilities are now quite different than they were just two weeks ago. Many facilities are shuttered and many that are open are staffed and operated by skeleton crews. Consumables that were readily available before are now scarce. These things make the job of the FM exponentially more difficult.

Exactly what is the facility manager dealing with? What has changed as the result of the COVID-19 outbreak and the global response? How is it being localized at the facility level and by industry?

**Over the past few days, I sat down and created a list of questions that the facilities manager must consider as the direct result of COVID-19:**



## QUESTIONS

- ▶ Can building control systems be reprogrammed to run more efficiently during this time? For buildings that are still open, occupancy is greatly reduced. Are these systems adaptable? Do they require a service tech to change?
  - ▶ Research has shown that higher humidity levels inhibit the spread of the COVID-19 virus and its viability outside a host. What humidity levels can be achieved and maintained without causing undesirable second and third order effects?
- ▶ Can chillers handle a significantly reduced heat load without issue? Fewer personnel working in buildings reduces equipment loads. Chiller efficiency drops off dramatically as load decreases.
- ▶ What is the minimum staffing level that can still operate and maintain facilities effectively and provide a safe working environment? Is there a list of essential operations and maintenance personnel? Do all essential operations and maintenance personnel have required travel documentation should the state or locality issue a stay-at-home order?
- ▶ Can space utilization be altered to minimize risk to employees while also reducing the load on maintenance/cleaning staff? The more of a building that is open to use and access, the greater the cleaning effort required.
- ▶ Can PPE be provided in proper levels and numbers to both operations and maintenance staff?
- ▶ Can supply chains be maintained or do alternatives need to be pursued? How are deliveries handled? Are deliveries required to be quarantined or sterilized in some manner? Can daily consumables like soap, toilet paper, and paper towels be supplied to meet operational requirements?
- ▶ Can or should building services and support services like health clinics, day care, gyms, credit unions, and cafeterias be maintained?
- ▶ Is the organization's EHS capability funded and staffed to be able to support an effective COVID-19 response?
- ▶ How does the cleaning schedule and regimen have to be altered to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19? Is there funding to support this?
- ▶ What additional cleaners and techniques will have to be employed to maximize the likelihood of disinfecting building surfaces.
- ▶ Are any specialty cleaning tools or equipment required to effectively protect employees?
- ▶ Should maintenance contractor access to grounds and facilities be suspended?
- ▶ Should planned/scheduled maintenance projects be postponed?
- ▶ How are emergency maintenance or services calls handled during this time?
- ▶ If an employee or visitor has tested positive for COVID-19, what cleanup efforts have been undertaken?

**Analyzing and addressing each of these questions will better equip the facilities manager to develop and put in place an effective COVID-19 Facilities Action Plan.**



*Paul Williams is the President and Founding Partner of ISM Services, Incorporated. ISM is headquartered in Pennsylvania and focuses on the implementation and maintenance of Facilities IT solutions. ISM is currently celebrating its 15th year in business.*

*In the next article, he addresses how the facilities manager is addressing Human Capital issues as the result of COVID-19.*