



Crisis Management: How Facilities Teams Will Use Data for Coronavirus—and Beyond



Introduction

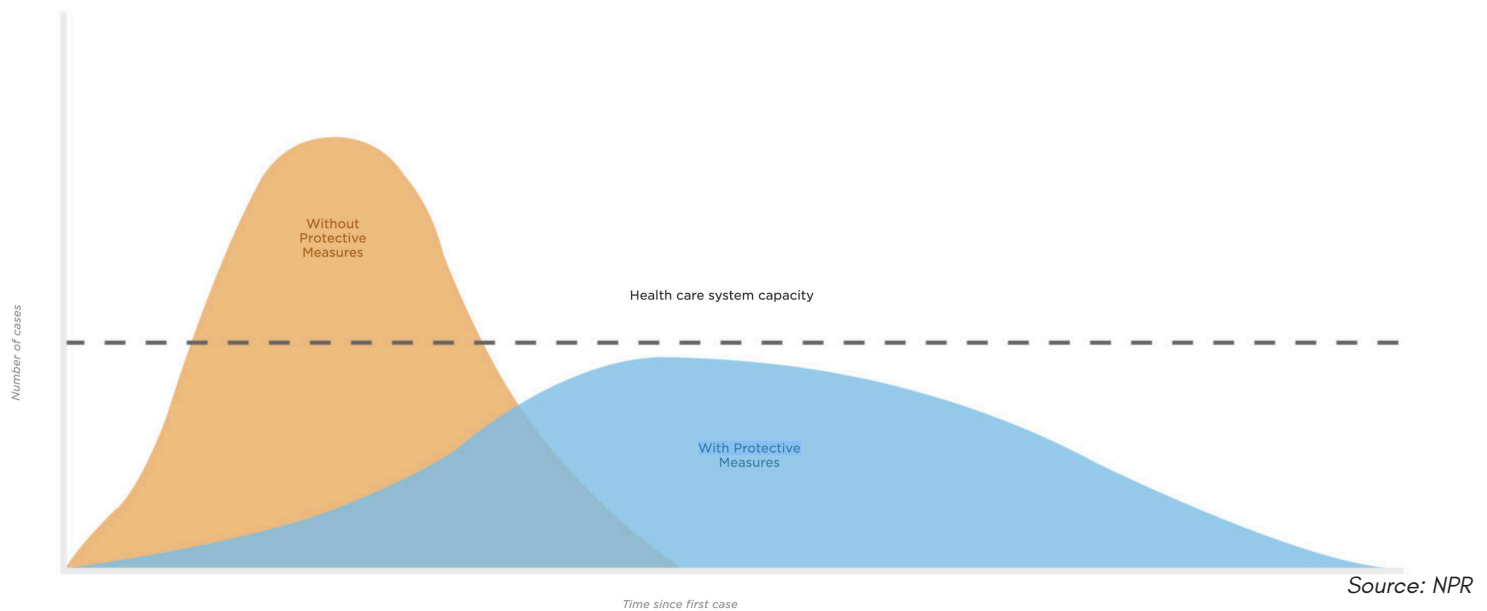
Facilities management teams serve on the front lines of the fight against global pandemics in the business community. During the current COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, facilities managers are helping head up corporate response in terms of employee safety and health, and they're filling crisis manager and response coordinator roles.

One of the most valuable tools possessed by facility management leaders is highly accurate facilities data including spatial information of both employees and assets associated with the day-to-day business operations. FM:Systems created this guide to help you think through employee health and business continuity issues, including how to use workplace management solutions to support your organization.

Coronavirus: What Businesses Need to Know

SARS-COV-2 is the name of the coronavirus and COVID-19 is the disease that this virus causes. This pandemic is more urgent than other public health crises in recent history because of its global spread, high rate of transmission, long and often asymptomatic incubation period, and the high percentage of cases that require serious hospital care.

This coronavirus is predominantly spread through droplets expelled during coughs and sneezes and touch fomites on surfaces. Smaller, aerosolized particles may be able to linger in the air for several hours and the virus lives on surfaces for up to several days. Soap and water as well as a variety of commercial and household cleaning solutions (see Appendix) are effective ways to disinfect surfaces and hands.



How “Flatten the Curve” Affects Business Operations

As the pandemic intensified, government response shifted from a strategy of containment to mitigation. The new goal to “flatten the curve” aims to prevent large numbers of severely ill people from needing hospital services at the same time. This should protect the healthcare system and buy time to develop therapeutic treatments and a vaccine. National, state and local governments have issued guidance for nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) with significant business impacts:

- Travel restrictions (international and domestic)
- Telework mandates (work from home)
- Limitations on the size of public and private gatherings
- School closures (employees will have children at home)
- Event cancellations (sports, entertainment, trade shows)
- Orders to close businesses where people congregate (bars, restaurants, salons, spas)
- “Shelter in Place” orders (also called full lockdowns over localities or states)

The Role of Facilities Management in Crisis Response

When a pandemic or other crisis strikes, facilities management will be called up to help businesses ensure buildings and employees remain safe and healthy. The data you collect every day through workplace management technology can support the business during challenging times. Let's examine some of the areas to include in crisis management plans and how workplace data may allow your company to respond more quickly and effectively.

Employee Health and Safety

Cleaning and Sanitation

If your business is not ordered to close by the government and you remain open through the pandemic, cleaning and sanitation will be the most important tool to help employees stay safe and healthy. Normal sanitation procedures and cleaning frequencies may not be sufficient—especially in areas such as restrooms and meeting rooms and high touch surfaces such as door handles, faucets or keypads. Your plan should include processes for decontaminating workspaces and common areas if confirmed cases present among employees or visitors to your buildings.

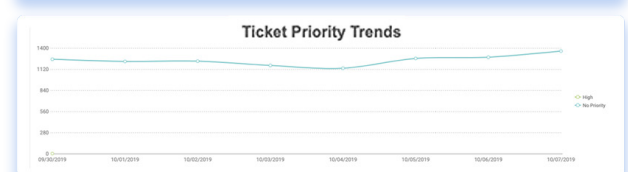
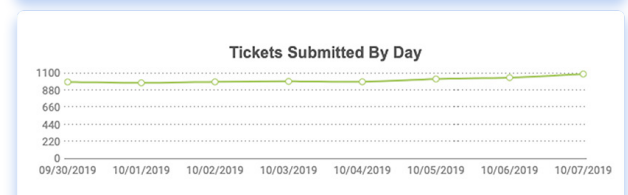
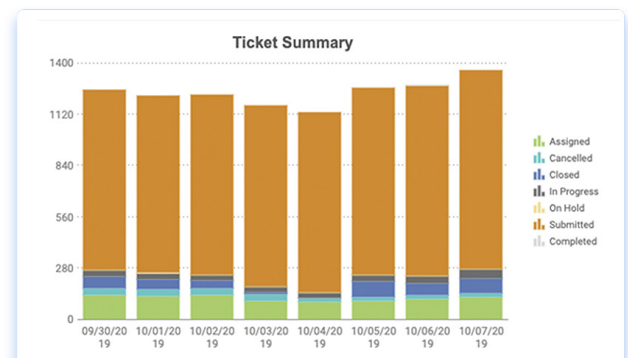
Planning Questions:

- How often will individual workspaces require cleaning during the outbreak?
- What areas require more frequent cleaning, such as communal areas?
- When employees test positive for the virus, what additional deep cleaning and disinfection measures will need to be performed and where?
- What cleaning solutions provide adequate disinfection for this virus? (see Appendix)
- What personal protective equipment (PPE) do janitorial and maintenance staff need to avoid becoming infected?

How Workplace Management Technology Helps

Preventative maintenance solutions can help you manage repetitive cleaning tasks by extending it to your janitorial and sanitizing operations. Preschedule additional work orders for wiping down high touch surfaces, including flat surfaces, door handles, elevator buttons, handrails, and touch screen panels.

Real-time occupancy data and alerts enable you to make rapid adjustments to your planned cleaning schedule. For example, you could send priority work orders for cleaning the work area of an employee who has called in sick with the virus. Or you could quickly send janitorial crews to meeting rooms where groups have gathered, after their meeting has ended.





Fixed Asset Management to Promote Hygiene

You may need to quickly install some new fixed assets that support employee hygiene in better ways. You will definitely want to place hand sanitizer stations with signage near every entrance to the building and inside the building in strategic locations. Additionally, you might want to put up posters directing employees to wash hands frequently, cough or sneeze into tissues, and stay home if ill.

Planning Questions

- What is the correct number of hand sanitizing stations for the building?
- Where should we place the stations?
- Should we place educational posters for handwashing or other hygiene instructions?
- Could we benefit from retrofitting bathrooms with more touchless fixtures such as auto-flush toilets and hand-sensing faucets and soap dispensers and touchless paper towel dispensers?
- Do our restrooms have doors with handles or knobs? If yes, should we provide paper towels so employees do not have to touch these surfaces and can exit the room with clean hands?

How Workplace Management Technology Helps

Asset tracking technology keeps track of the location of equipment and supply areas and when coupled with preventive maintenance programs can enable facilities management to direct tasks such as locating, inspecting and filling hand sanitizers, and restocking cleaning materials.

Physical Space Management for Social Distancing

Governments have been issuing guidance to employers about how to increase the social distance between employees. Telework is strongly preferred, when possible. For those who cannot work from home, businesses will need to help maintain six feet distance between employees as they work.

Planning Questions

- How many employees have jobs that can translate to a remote work situation?
- What is needed for IT to quickly ramp up network access and equipment for home workers?
- For workers who remain in the building, how many could be moved to private offices?
- What is the density of workspaces in each area of the building?
- How can we assign employees to workspaces that are at least six feet apart?
- What is the capacity of common areas such as break rooms, meeting rooms or cafeterias? How many employees should be allowed there during social distancing?
- Could workers be separated into multiple shifts, with enhanced cleanings between shifts, in order to expand space between workstations?

How Workplace Management Technology Helps

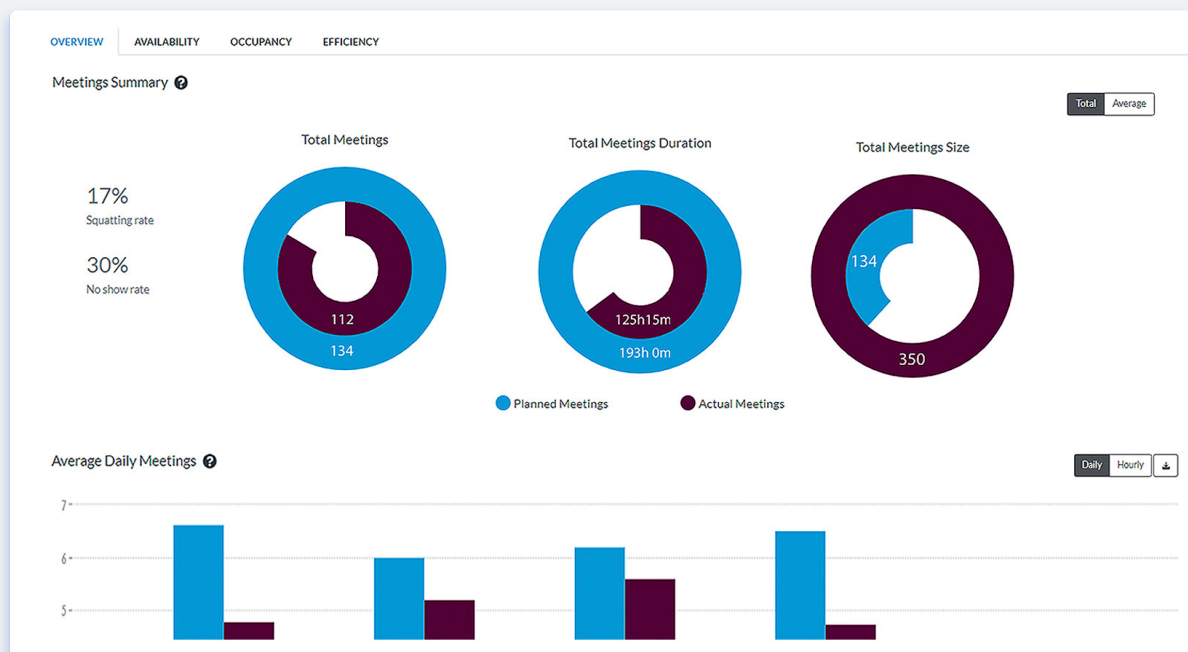
Remote Work: After the pandemic has passed, not all employees may return to full-time office work. Remote work is the new reality; some employees find themselves more productive without office distractions. If more people work from home, companies can achieve higher real estate utilization with a hot desking strategy, also called hoteling. You may not want employees to share desks, phones, and keyboards until after the pandemic. But when you're ready to pursue hot desking, your workspace management solution will provide the reservation system.

Workspaces: When you're planning for social distancing of employees, your workplace management solution provides a physical space inventory for studying your organization's building and determining the types of spaces and their associated risk. Physical space inventory data identifies areas where employees congregate that may be more susceptible to the spread of COVID-19.





Meeting Rooms: During social distancing, you will want to keep group meetings small. In addition to leaving six feet between workers, you need to comply with government mandates about limited gathering sizes. Your physical space inventory will identify the normal capacity of meeting rooms on the visual floorplan. Use your meeting room reservation system to adjust room capacities down during the pandemic to maintain social distancing. Track the usage of any reserved space over time by reviewing booking history. If your organization has deployed occupancy sensors, mobile booking apps, or booking kiosks, it's even possible to see if people actually showed up for a meeting.



Outside Visitors

During this pandemic, some buildings will opt to suspend outside visitors. The facility management team should guide the discussion about temporary visitor policies. If you are not using RFID visitor badges or tracking mobile device locations, it can be difficult to be certain about where visitors go after they gain entrance to the building.

Planning Questions

- Do we have the ability to track the movements of visitors within our buildings?
- Can we enable telephone or video conferencing as a substitute for in-person meetings?
- How will we know if visitors have become positive cases for COVID-19?

How Workplace Management Technology Helps

People leave an amazing amount of digital fingerprints across every space they occupy. If your company lacks the ability to track visitors' locations, you could use data about the employee's visitors are meeting as a rough proxy for visitors' locations.



Air Quality Inside Facilities

Because the SAR-COV-2 virus travels in respiratory droplets and aerosols, you will need to consider procedures to maintain and decontaminate the heating, ventilation, air-conditioning systems in buildings. You might also need to increase air flow and bring more fresh outside air into the building.

How Workplace Management Technology Helps

Environmental sensors can map air quality on a visual building floorplan, allowing you to see areas that may need better air flow. Preventative maintenance systems enable you to schedule new HVAC decontamination routines and schedule more frequent filter changes and other maintenance tasks.

Business Continuity

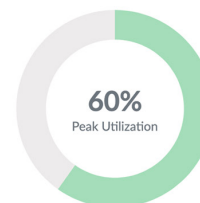
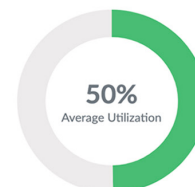
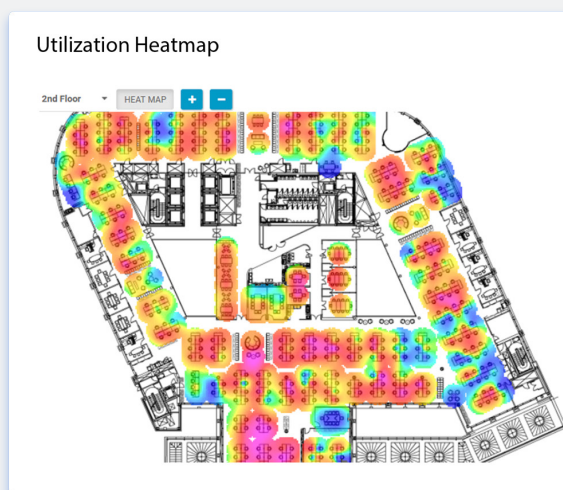
Facilities management has an important role to play in keeping leaders apprised of situations that could negatively impact continuing operations. Real-time workplace data is of paramount importance. Here are four ways to use workplace and facilities data to support business continuity:

1. Monitoring Absenteeism: Help executives predict surges of absenteeism: Occupancy sensors and visual floorplans let you see when certain teams or physical locations of the building (departments, floors) experience higher rates of absence. This data—complemented by Time & Attendance data from HR—helps leaders see how the pandemic is moving within the workforce.

2. Tracking and Contact Tracing COVID-19 Cases: As cases arise, it will be critical for facilities management to know where they've gone in the building. Employers and public health authorities will need to know who else had contact with the individual over the prior 14 days. Occupancy sensors, network logins, meeting room reservations, meeting requests, and badge swipes or door access information can enable you to track flow and map locations.

3. Ensuring Employees Under Quarantine Orders Stay Out: Many people who test positive for COVID-19 will experience only mild illness. They may feel capable of continuing to work, but they must not enter the building—even after hours to pick up work for home. Use workplace technology to temporarily disable the individual's access for access for the proscribed time.

4. Maintaining Supply Chains: Keeping employees healthy and the workplace sanitary are top facilities management priorities. Data about past purchasing patterns of janitorial and hygiene products will help you project upwards for items that will be heavily consumed in the pandemic, such as hand sanitizer, paper products, and cleaning supplies.





Conclusion

This is a challenging time for businesses and the people that work for them. Facilities Management teams will be on the front lines of helping their businesses adapt and evolve in a world of coronavirus, social distancing, and shutdowns. The organizations best prepared for crisis management are those with access to highly actionable and accurate data about their facilities and employees and visibility to continually monitor their facilities portfolio and operations.

Facilities managers who know how to leverage data streams flowing through their workplace management technology and other operations systems will be well-positioned to weather the current pandemic. They will also evolve their readiness to face future situations because they have effective response plans and technology in place.

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Appendix I Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources for Facilities Managers

Pandemic Planning Resources for Facilities Management

[IFMA Foundation Pandemic Preparedness Manual](#)

[IFMA COVID-19 Preparedness Resource Center](#)

[CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

[ASHRAE HVAC Guidance for COVID-19](#)

[U.S. EPA List of Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-COV-2](#)

Global and Federal Information, Situation Updates, and Guidance

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

[United States Government](#)

[Johns Hopkins University & Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center](#)

[UK COVID-19 Resource Page](#)

[Scotland](#)

[Wales](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)

U.S. State and Locality Guidance and Orders

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