



Independent workplace compliance

White Paper

The workplace - what's in store for 2024?

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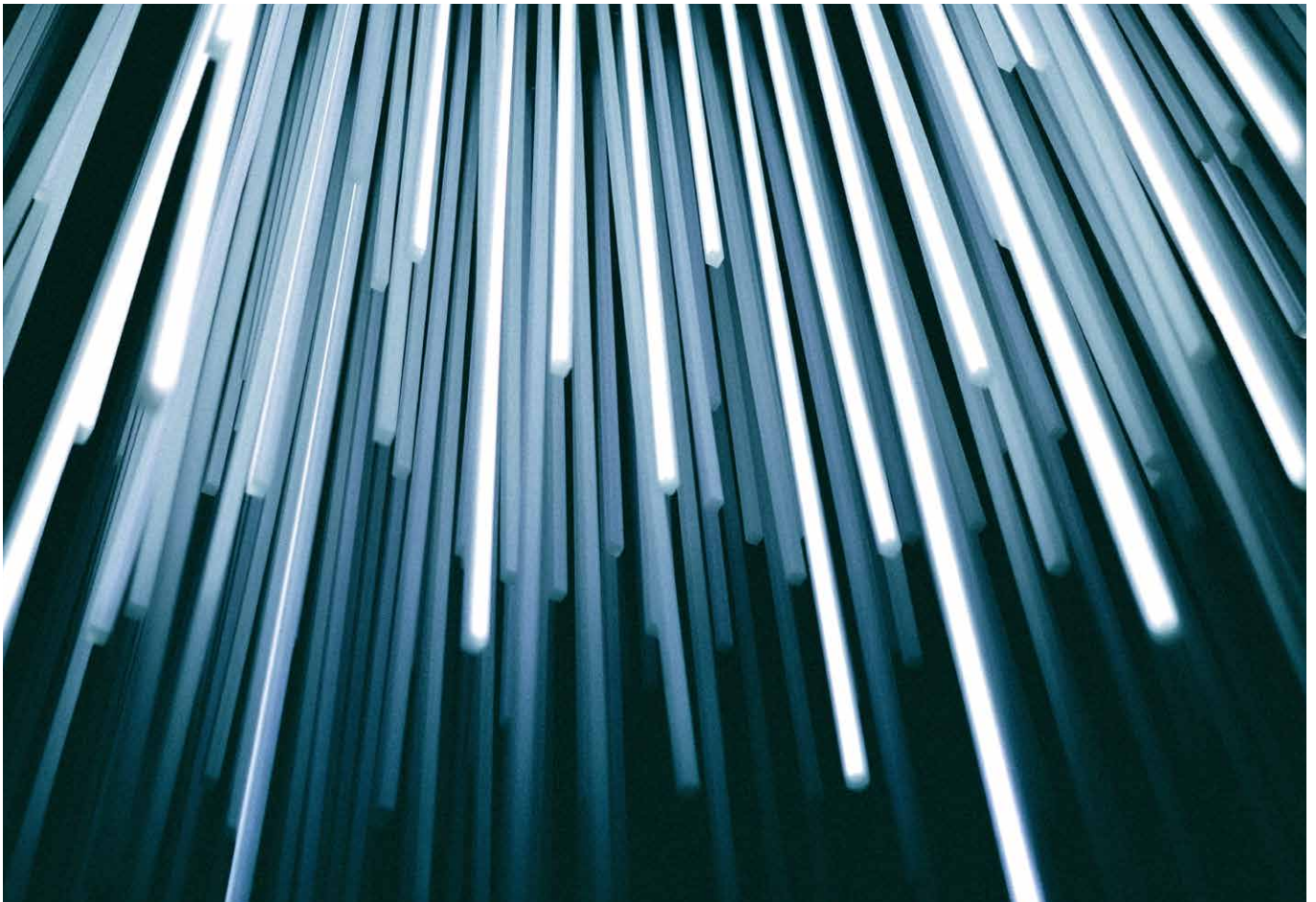
The workplace - what's in store for 2024?

2024 sees the 50th anniversary of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Over the intervening period, we have seen considerable change to the operating landscape for organisations, and the buildings they operate from. But what does this anniversary year have in store for future developments and influences.

For our last whitepaper of 2023, we are looking at some of those influences and the opportunities and threats they may offer, to those responsible for managing workplaces.

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1. The workplace environment takes on greater significance

As more people return to or are encouraged to return to their place of work, the importance of the workplace and workplace environment will continue to play a significant role in 2024.

Having the right controls in place for workplace air, water and occupancy comfort will play a vital role in re-assuring employees and equally visibility and delivery of your general health and safety. Being able to verifiably demonstrate your building performance, will pay dividends for user satisfaction, productivity, and the role of the Facilities Manager.

Contrary to a lot of adverse comment, particularly on indoor air quality, we are seeing, our experience of well-managed, well-maintained buildings is their environments are very good.

What information do you currently have on your internal environmental quality, how is it quality assured, accredited and verifiable, and how are you using it?



2. Keep healthy as well as safe

Historically, for most organisations, safety has had a greater profile in terms of activity. Looking at the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) annual figures for 2023, while workplace injuries have been showing a decreasing trend over the last two decades, work-related ill health looks to be rising.

In 2022/23, 1.8 million workers were estimated to be suffering from new or long-standing work-related ill health issues. These figures are broken down into:

- 875,000 workers suffering with stress, depression or anxiety (49%);
- 473,000 workers suffering with musculoskeletal disorders (27%); and
- 422,000 workers suffering with other type of illness (24%) – this would include, for example, occupational lung disease, noise induce hearing loss, hand arm vibration, asbestos, and other occupational cancers.

With the HSE already running a number of campaigns and interventions around work-related ill health, the trend for investment in both mental and physical health over the long-term and short-term is likely to increase.

[About HSE statistics](#)

3. Hybrid by long-term design

The last three years has seen the rapid development of the hybrid work model. Although, many of the shorter-term “fixes” put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic remain in place.

The hybrid workstyle is seen as beneficial to employees, particularly from a work-life balance perspective, however it also extends the health and safety considerations that employers need to make.

A longer-term hybrid strategy means the potential risks to employees also need a longer-term focus and that should include:

- Risk assessing and reviewing the activities being carried out;
- Considering the frequency of the work activity, what is being done and for how long;
- What equipment and training are required and how will they be maintained and delivered respectively?
- What methods of communication, information and supervision do you need to employ?
- How will the longer-term change in building occupancy / use affect the existing control measures in place and how are you going to accommodate them in the longer term?
- Have any changes to the physical building or building operation occurred (or are being planned), and have these been considered as part of your ongoing risk management?

The location of some or all of your work activities may have changed, but the employer’s duty of care has not.



4. Non-compliance will get more expensive

Over recent years we have seen the reported trend for health and safety enforcement notices and numbers of prosecutions reducing. As a result of the introduction of the sentencing guidelines for health and safety, corporate manslaughter, and food safety in 2016, fines for breaching the legislation have considerably increased.

By way of illustration, in 2013/14, dutyholders found guilty of health and safety offences received fines totalling £16.6 million, in 2023, and to date the top 10 fines alone totalled approx. £15 million with £600,000 costs.



5. Fire safety stays in focus

The introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2022 has had a profound effect on those responsible for managing in scope buildings. The further requirements of Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022 (which came into force on 1st October 2023) also saw 'Responsible Persons' having to record, retain and share greater information, including:

- A completed fire risk assessment and in full (previously only specific information needed recording where the employer had 5 or more employees);
- The identity of the individual and/or name of the third party instructed to undertake/ review the fire risk assessment; and
- Their fire safety arrangements (effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring, and review of their preventive and protective measures) and contact information.

These together with the requirements for better building safety information to be produced, developed, and maintained for existing as well as new buildings (again falling into scope), means there is a greater expectation on what, duty holders (be they Accountable Persons (AP), Principal Accountable Persons (PAP) or Responsible Persons, need to have in place, and occupiers can see.

How such requirements are extended and what further buildings they will cover remains to be seen. Many of them are, however, equally applicable, and valid for buildings not yet in scope, and so gathering the information in advance could be of benefit on several levels.



6. Technology

Technology in health and safety and workplace management is not new. With the development of AI, it is also likely to continue to offer the potential for improving safety, as well as optimising costs and performance. As with any tool though it will only ever be as good as the core information it is populated with, and the way the knowledge it provides is used.

The temptation to implement an array of technology solutions is considerable, but we must also recognise the dangers of information overload (too much data can become unmanageable and so object defeating), or the need to properly trial solutions to make sure that they can deliver what you need.

Systems that are tailorable and scalable to your workplace, and that can demonstrate they are providing the outcomes you want, must be your first consideration. Equally if you are using tech to monitor for example air quality (i.e. carbon dioxide levels) or water temperatures, check calibration frequencies and maintenance requirements, as these can have a significant effect on performance.



7. Adverse weather

2023 has been a year of extreme weather events to which the UK has not been immune. The National Audit Office Report “Government resilience: extreme weather”, published this month highlights the effects extreme weather events have already had in the UK, including:

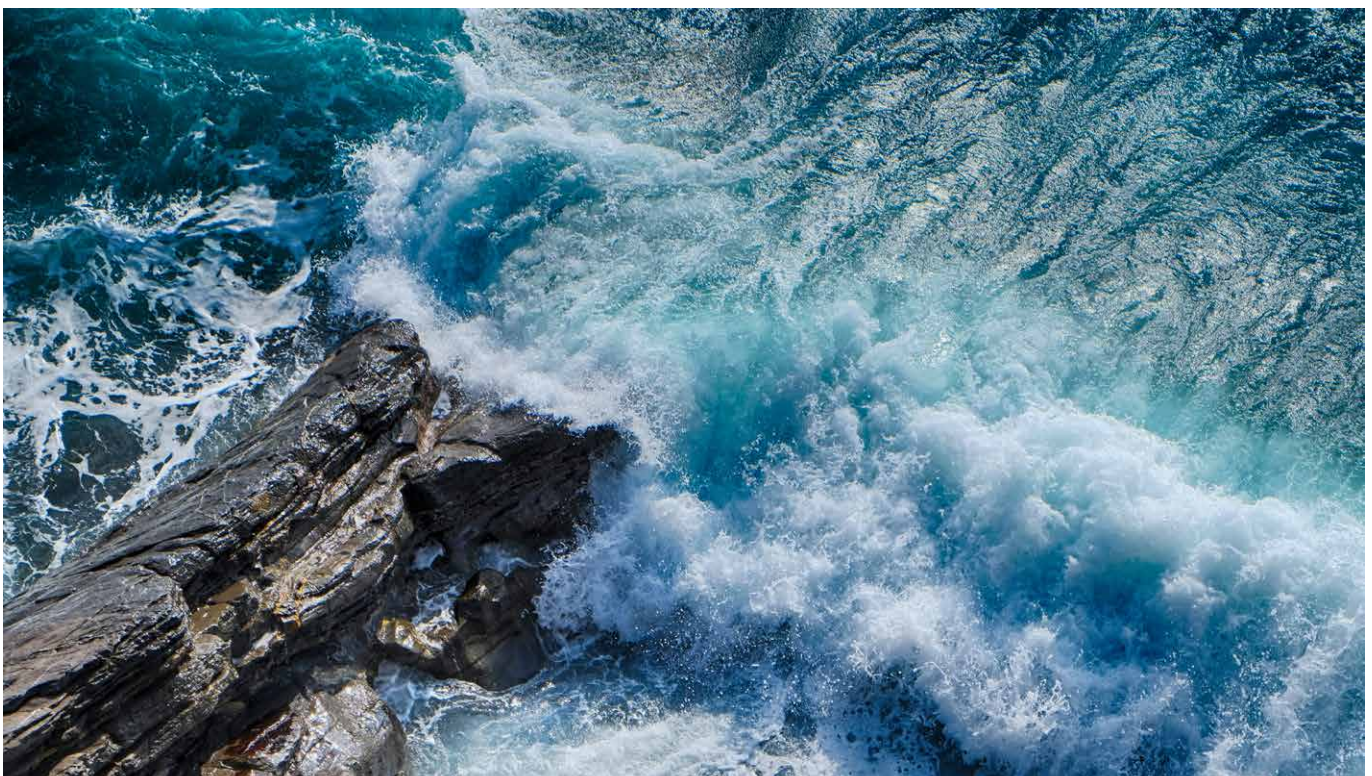
- More than 4,500 deaths associated with the hottest days in England in 2022 (when the temperature passed 40°C for the first time since records began);
- 1.4 million properties left without power because of Storm Eunice in 2022;
- £96 million the impact on the economy (lost profits) of the 2012 drought in England, according to a 2013 estimate; and
- 60% of properties at risk of surface water flooding out of all properties at risk of flooding (coastal, fluvial, groundwater and surface water) across England.

It goes on to identify that by “2050 hot summers in the UK are projected to double in frequency and the chance of a summer as hot as 2018 (the joint hottest on record) is expected to be 50%”.

The link to the report is [Government resilience: extreme weather - Summary \(nao.org.uk\)](https://www.nao.org.uk/publications/2023/government-resilience-extreme-weather-summary/)

Whereas the seasonal extremes of snow, ice, and heat still remain relatively predictable, flooding, and wind (as we have seen over the last couple of years) can come at any time. Equally, the historic disruption to work caused by these events has, to some extent, been ameliorated by hybrid work, the loss of infrastructure, utilities, and our ability to travel however has not.

With 8 of the of the nearly 90 risks covered in the UK Government’s 2023 National Risk Register are weather related, we have been told. So, planning what you need to do to keep your organisation safe and operational, should start before you get the warning.



8. Proving it – the continued growth of ESG (and other reporting)

As with technology (see 6. above), non-financial risk reporting is nothing new. However, the blend of information now being required, or asked for, to satisfy governance and not just either/or environmental and social criteria is increasing. This trend is likely to continue too. As McKinsey observed:

“To take one example, there has been a fivefold growth in internet searches for ESG since 2019, even as searches for “CSR” (corporate social responsibility) – an earlier area of focus more reflective of corporate engagement than changes to a core business model—have declined.”

For no small element of ESG reporting, workplace and facilities management will have agency or influence in what is being done, if not what and how it is reported. Critical to this process for internal as well as external reporting is that the information you are delivering is accurate, verifiable, and meaningful.

The most obvious candidate for coverage from a workplace perspective is carbon management and net zero, although, health, safety, building operations and compliance, to name but four, could add positively to the outputs too.

With a host of stakeholders increasingly using ESG and other reporting (sustainability, CSR, etc.) to inform their decisions, it is not just about corporate image anymore, but talent attraction/retention, reputation, community engagement, and of course investment. And if workplace and facilities management don't engage, other parts of the business certainly will.



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