

We are here to help you.

School Site Reopening: Property Risk Management Guidance



As the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, educational buildings and facilities will gradually be reopened.

Please use this guide to consider the steps needed to safely re-open your building. The guidance will also be of use to those schools who have remained partially open in line with Government guidance.

Within the Appendix we have produced a checklist to support the reopening process.

Important Notice

Whilst reopening is taking place, please ensure that Government guidelines and restrictions continue to be observed.

Safety is the number one priority when restoring power and utilities to your building. Please contact qualified engineers such as approved electricians, heating engineers or plumbers if you require assistance.

Please note that this is intended to provide generic guidance only, to help you identify what practical steps may need to be taken to reopen your building safely. Please continue to refer to all Government, regulatory and legislative guidance to ensure your organisation's continued compliance with their regulatory obligations with regards to building safety.

Risk Control Measures – Reopening

The guidance has been divided into four key areas:

Section 1: Arson & Site Inspections

Section 2: Management of Contractors & Hot Work

Section 3: Steps to Reinstate the Electrical Power

Section 4: General Issues including Statutory Inspections, Legionella, Fire Safety and Maintenance

Appendix: The Checklist which covers all four sections above

Section 1: Arson & Site Inspections

- **Walk round (external and internal):** If your site staff have been unable to complete routine inspections during the Government restrictions, please complete a full internal and external walk round of your building(s). This is about making sure your site is safe for staff, pupils, visitors and contractors coming back to site.

Externally, please look for signs of damage to fencing, any damage to the building e.g. signs of a break-in, signs of storm damage and for discarded rubbish or blocked drains.

For the internal walk round, please complete in accordance with your normal weekly/monthly fire safety inspections e.g. checking fire doors are closed or that hold open devices correctly operate, fire exit routes are clear, fire exit doors operate and are not blocked etc.

With a reduced staff presence, it may be necessary to review fire safety procedures and your Fire Risk Assessment

- **Arson:** School arson fires occur for a number of reasons, from pupils playing with fire to those that are deliberately set with the intent of causing damage. These fires are unwelcome at any time, but now is a great opportunity to ensure the arson risks are minimised.

The most important step is to remove sources of combustible materials away from your building. Whether these are your waste bins, litter bins that are too close buildings, contractor waste skips, external learning materials or school buses.

It's a good idea to have a structured approach to assessing all combustible materials around the buildings and limiting access to these, especially outside of normal school hours.

- **Site Security:** As part of the lockdown process a review of perimeter fencing and gates would have helped identify any holes or weak points. This should be kept under review to ensure robust perimeter security.

If your buildings are only partially occupied, then consider retaining your intruder alarm and physical security to these unoccupied areas. Many school intruder alarm systems have been designed so that different zones can be set at different times.

Section 2: Management of Contractors & Hot Work

- **Control of Contractors & Hot Work:** It is considered important that contractors are appropriately managed on-site whilst adhering to social distancing and other Government guidance.

Contractors may introduce additional risks such as waste skips or combustible materials being placed too close to buildings, the fire alarm or sprinkler systems may need isolating or hot work such as welding, angle grinding or torch applied roofing.

In line with your insurance policy conditions, please notify Zurich Municipal in advance of any hot work taking place.

Ideally contractors should avoid hot work but, if this is not possible, please ensure that they risk assess the area being worked on. Many hot work fires have started after combustible materials or insulation in the work area were not identified or protected from the hot work activity.

Another key issue is around the fire watch. Fire watches need to cover any breaks during the day as well as the final fire watch after the work has completed.

For torch applied roofing, the Safe2Torch guidance, including the Safe2Torch checklist, must be completed.

Section 3: Steps to Reinstate the Electrical Power

- **Electrical Power:** Many schools will have retained power either for the partial opening or for teaching staff to help manage the transition to home learning.

If you have isolated the power at the circuit board(s) to individual buildings or certain areas for a few weeks to a few months it is not anticipated that, under normal conditions, the system will have deteriorated.

If you have isolated the power, before switching the power back-on, it is considered good practice to have a visual check of the circuit board(s) to ensure these visually appear in good condition and have no signs of damage e.g. to cable insulation etc.

Important Note: If in doubt, DO NOT switch on the power and contact a qualified electrician to support you. Your health and safety is the number one priority.

If there are any signs of water ingress to the building e.g. from a leaking roof or flood damage, then a qualified electrician will be needed to confirm when it is safe to restore power.

Please make sure electrical rooms and riser cupboards are clear of combustible materials before switching the power back on.

- **Electrical Power (long term closure, greater than 1 year):** If any part of your site or building(s) have been unoccupied for a longer period of time e.g. it had been already closed prior to the Government restrictions being imposed then the fixed electrical wiring will need to be inspected and tested prior to reusing the building.
- **Electrical – Hazardous Machinery & Plant:** It is anticipated that schools will have safely isolated any machinery such as woodworking equipment, 3D printers, kilns etc as part of the normal daily closedown. If power has been isolated to these areas, please check that these machines are isolated and will not automatically start up.
- **Electrical – Ancillary Equipment:** Have a procedure in place for all ancillary equipment that may have been isolated e.g. photovoltaic panels or other roof mounted energy equipment or battery back-up power supplies. Please refer to the manufacturer's and installer's guidelines.
- **Air-conditioning (electrical power surge):** If you have isolated power to any air-conditioning units, there is a power surge risk if you re-start too many units at once. In consultation with an electrical engineer, plan for a phased switch on of air-conditioning units.
- **Electrical Power – Restore in Sections:** Most locations will have kept power switched on to essential circuits e.g. intruder and fire alarms, in this case restore power to individual equipment and circuits rather than all at once. If you have, for any reason, isolated the power at the main switch, in this case only, switch off the individual circuit breakers (equipment, lighting and distribution boards), then turn on the main breaker, and restore power in sections to the distribution boards, lighting and then equipment. If in any doubt, please consult with a qualified electrician.
- **Electrical - Power Restored:** Once the power has been restored, it is considered to be good practice to visually check the circuit board(s) after 30 minutes (once devices on the circuit have been switched back on), for any abnormal conditions e.g. circuit breaker trip, any unusual sounds, burning smell or visual signs of overheating. If available, the use of thermal imaging by a qualified thermographer to support the identification of overheating is recommended

Important Note: If any issues are found then please isolate the power, provided if it is safe to do so, and immediately contact a qualified electrician.

A final visual check within the next 24 hours should identify any immediate issues.

The Residual Current Device can be tested (current UK regulations only require the RCD device to be tested every 6 months).

- **Fixed electrical wiring test (periodic inspection):** If your fixed electrical wiring test and inspection is now due (either the complete test or the partial section if you complete a phased approach e.g. 20% of circuits each year), please ensure this is booked in as soon as is reasonably practical.

Where there are any specific legal or regulatory conditions for testing your electrical installation, then please ensure that these are complied with.

- **Electrical (refrigeration plant):** If you have isolated the power to refrigeration equipment for the main kitchen there is a small possibility that such equipment may fail when turning the power back on e.g. due to a compressor failure. Ensure that such equipment is powered back on and working before purchasing new stock especially if you're dependent upon a single fridge or freezer. Please refer to the manufacturer's guidance.

Section 4: General Issues including Statutory Inspections, Legionella, Fire Safety and Maintenance

- **Statutory Inspections:** Please ensure you continue to comply with relevant legislation and ongoing guidance. Please refer to the HSE website and Zurich website for the latest information:
 - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/work-equipment-coronavirus.htm>
 - <https://www.zurich.co.uk/en/engineering/coronavirus>

For details of systems requiring inspection please see our [Zurich Engineering website](#).

- **Legionella:** Legionnaires is a serious bacterial disease that can exist in water systems and be contracted by inhaling small particles of water that contain the bacteria. It is a particular concern within cooling systems and specific regulations apply.

Water stagnation, dead ends in the water supply, reduced use of water and water that is stored above 20C, and below 50C – 60C, can create conditions that promote growth of the bacteria associated with Legionnaires disease.

The Legionella Control Association (LCA) has issued guidance regarding the Safe Management of Water Systems in Buildings during the COVID-19 Outbreak which also includes details on Recommissioning Water Systems.

Please ensure the LCA guidance is followed: <https://www.legionellacontrol.org.uk/news/90/>

For general guidance on the control of legionella bacteria in water systems please refer to the Approved Code of Practice L8: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l8.htm>

- **Air-conditioning systems:** For buildings with air-conditioning systems we would refer customers to the BESA Guidance:
 - For a general statement: <https://www.thebesa.com/blog/covid-19-and-air-conditioning-systems/>
 - For specific guidance (will open as a pdf): <https://www.thebesa.com/media/837569/updated-9the-april-refcom-tb-48-4-covid19-ac-systems.pdf>
 - Link to BESA resources (will open as a pdf): <https://www.thebesa.com/media/837544/sfg20-building-maintenance-guidance-covid-19.pdf>
- **Heating:** For heating and hot water you may have either switched your system to a lower temperature, in which case it is a simple case of returning the system to your normal settings. If a plumber has isolated the system e.g. either a wet or dry lay-up of your boiler, please contact your boiler engineer to reinstate the system.
- **Maintenance:** As part of the restart process, please resume your planned and preventative maintenance programmes as soon as possible, starting with safety critical and other key equipment.
- **Suppliers:** In terms of your suppliers they may be experiencing varying levels of disruption to their services or products. As part of the reopening plans, consider creating a checklist of key suppliers for your school and confirming the availability of your key product or service needs.
- **Building Management Systems:** If you have a Building Management System (BMS) then checks should be made regarding any fault conditions and ensuring they receive attention. Have a contact list for your service companies and confirm they are able to respond to any critical fault.

- **Roof leaks:** If possible, visually inspect from a safe location for any external signs of damage to your roof.
Please internally inspect the top floor for any signs of water ingress e.g. puddles on the floor, damp walls or stains on ceiling tiles. These may indicate a leaking water pipe, damage to an internal gutter or leaking roof. These will require further investigation.
- **Taps:** If you have isolated the water supply to any building(s), you may have opened taps to help drain the system, or taps may have been left in the open position. Prior to reinstatement of the mains water supply, have a checklist for inspecting all toilets, kitchens, plant rooms and other areas with a water supply to ensure all taps are in the off position and plug holes are open and are not blocked. Repeat this check once the water has been restored.
Please make sure to only open the mains water valve during normal, weekday, opening hours and have the contact details for a plumber in case of any leaks.
- **Sprinkler and Fire Alarm Systems:** Check the sprinkler and fire alarm panels for any faults. If you have temporarily halted weekly inspections, please reinstate these along with your maintenance and service contracts.
- **Sprinkler valves:** Have a trained individual check that the sprinkler system is fully operational, including that the sprinkler valves are in the open position, that power supplies to the pump(s) are on and, for diesel pumps, there is at least $\frac{3}{4}$ tank of fuel present.
- **Sprinkler and Fire Alarm Remote Signalling:** Make sure that your remote signalling is in place for the fire alarm and sprinkler system.
- **Sprinkler Impairments:** Please inform Zurich before switching off the sprinkler system i.e. if any maintenance work is needed, via [our online notification system](#).
- **Emergency Contact Details:** Make sure your emergency contact lists are up-to-date.

School Site Reopening Checklist

Appendix (Page 1 of 3)

Site Checks	Complete	Date
Arson & Site Inspections		
Have you completed an internal and external tour of the building to confirm that there are no signs of damage or other issues of concern e.g. leaking pipes or damaged roofing?		
Are all waste bins (recycling, kitchen and general waste) located 8 metres from the building in a secure compound or chained/locked together?		
Have external areas been inspected for any loose combustible materials or waste e.g. wooden pallets?		
Are external learning areas clear of combustible (paper, plastic or wood) items outside of normal school hours?		
Are waste skips located 10m from buildings?		
Can school buses be parked 10 metres from buildings outside of normal school hours?		
Have you: a) Identified any easy access onto roofs, or is there a history of unauthorised access onto roofs? b) Identified any solutions to reduce the ease of access onto roofs?		
Have you secured parts of the building which are not currently being used and, where possible, maintained intruder alarm coverage to this area throughout the day?		
Management of Contractors & Hot Work		
If you are intending to have any hot work undertaken, have you notified Zurich Municipal in advance?		
For refurbishment work, have contractors confirmed they will adhere to the same rules for combustible rubbish, skips and combustible construction materials as the School?		
For hot work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a specific risk assessment of the hot work area been completed to identify any combustible materials, insulation or openings/voids within 10 metres? • Have appropriate controls been identified and put in place following the risk assessment? • Has a named Fire Watcher been employed to cover both breaks during the day AND the final fire watch period (60 minutes)? • Has a Hot Work Permit been completed? • Is the Safe2Torch Guidance and Checklist being followed? • If possible, can hot work be avoided and an alternative method of working selected? • Can the hot work be completed 10 metres from buildings and other combustible materials? • Confirmation received the contractor, and any subcontractor(s) hold Public Liability insurance including checks for any terms under the policy? 		

Site Checks	Complete	Date
Steps to Reinstate the Electrical Power		
If you have isolated any electrical circuits: before turning the power back-on, are circuit board(s) and associated cabling in good visual condition with no obvious signs of damage?		
Has the building experienced any water ingress or escape of water? If yes, please contact a qualified electrician prior to switching the power back on.		
Are connected devices switched off prior to switching the power back on?		
Are electrical switch rooms and electrical risers clear of combustible materials?		
Are there multiple air-conditioning units? Plan a phased switch on to avoid a power surge.		
Is electrical power being restored in sections to individual circuits and equipment?		
Has all refrigeration equipment been turned on to ensure it is functioning prior to restocking?		
Has ancillary equipment e.g. photovoltaic panels, UPS units, back-up power been checked in accordance with the original manufacturer's guidelines?		
After 30 minutes have you checked to ensure electrical systems are operating normally e.g. no burning smells, unusual sounds or signs of overheating?		
Within 24 hours have you carried out one further inspection to ensure the electrical systems are operating normally e.g. any burning smells, unusual sounds or signs of overheating?		
Do you have access to a thermal imaging camera and thermographer to identify hot spots?		
General Issues including Statutory Inspections, Legionella, Fire Safety and Maintenance		
If your School has a sprinkler system, have you ensured all monitored sprinkler isolating valves are in the open position at the control panel?		
Is the fire alarm operational and have any faults been reported/rectified?		
Are your statutory inspections up-to-date and in accordance with legal requirements?		
Legionella – have you confirmed compliance with the Legionella Control Association guidance before switching on water & cooling systems?		
Have air-conditioning systems been assessed in accordance with BESA guidance?		
Is the heating programme fully restored or has a boiler engineer been contacted to restore a wet/dry lay-up boiler?		
Have you completed an internal fire safety inspection e.g. checking fire doors, escape routes etc as per your existing procedures?		

Site Checks	Complete	Date
In terms of your suppliers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have key suppliers been identified and prioritised? • Have key suppliers been contacted to confirm their availability for products and/or services? • Are back-up suppliers available for key services? 		
Have you checked for any faults or warning on the Building Management System?		
Taps – prior to and following reinstatement of the water supply have you inspected all toilets, kitchens, plant rooms and other rooms with a water supply to ensure all taps are in the off position and plug holes are open?		
Has the sprinkler and fire alarm panel no faults?		
Have you re-established weekly fire protection tests and ensured maintenance inspections are in place?		
Has a competent person checked the sprinkler plant room to ensure the system is fully operational?		
Are your emergency contact lists up-to-date?		
Have you reviewed your fire risk assessment to take into account any temporary changes in the schools occupation and operation?		

This guidance may change as the current situation changes, [please refer back here](#) for our position on policy cover.

For any Schools requiring more detailed guidance on reopening e.g. relating to machinery issues, [please see our General Reopening Guidance document](#).

Zurich Insurance plc

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