



Frequently Asked Questions: Property Management

What is the process for moving to a new managing agent?

We try to make this process as straightforward as possible, typically following these steps:

- You contact us for a quote
- A manager from JM Estates will visit you
- You appoint us to manage
- We will serve notice on the existing managing agents
- We will write to the outgoing managing agents for handover information
- We will introduce ourselves to the residents, giving information and contact details

What areas of the UK do you cover?

We currently provide residential management services to 500+ properties and are able to serve customers across the UK.

Do you offer a dedicated support person for properties?

Yes. There will be a dedicated point of contact who carries out site inspections and attends AGM's and directors meetings. Behind the scenes we provide full support from the projects team, as well as our legal, accounts and health & safety staff.

Do you offer out of hours support?

Yes. We can offer an out of hours emergency service if your development requires it.

How are service charges managed?

- Service charge monies are held in Trust Accounts. There is a bank account for every development, which is for the sole use of that particular development.
- Accounts are handled by one of our dedicated accounts assistants – each looking after a portfolio of clients – who maintain the accounts up to trial balance in readiness for review by an independent accountant. Working alongside them are credit controllers with responsibility for recovering service charge debts, supported by a team of administrators and specialists who maintain an overview on the department.

How are property maintenance requests managed and recorded?

Our target turnaround times are as follows:

- Letters: within 2-3 days
- Emails to assistant manager / accounts: same day acknowledgement, aiming for an answer within 24 hours, dependant on how much information is requested
- Emails to area managers: 2-3 days due to site inspections, meetings etc.
- Phone calls: we deal with calls as we receive them. Our aim is to ensure that the person calling gets an immediate response from the person on the other end.

Please note there is no difference between turnaround time for lessees and directors.

Each year we submit a report showing the amount of work that has been carried out, and whether that is of a day to day matter or of a more specialist nature.

How often will you visit our property?

We carry out routine inspections quarterly; however if there is work being carried out by contractors we visit as often as is necessary to ensure that the contractor has finished the work in accordance with instructions, and to the required standard.

Which contractors do you use for maintenance work?

When specialist contractors are required, we engage only those who have been approved to our panel. Overseen by our facilities team, this process checks that suppliers are capable of completing the work to the required standard, that they maintain appropriate and current insurance and that they comply with Health and Safety regulations and Guidance Notes and CDM regulations. We check previous works, obtain references where appropriate and review completed work to ensure ongoing quality control.

Do you oversee major maintenance works?

Yes. Our definition of major works would be such things as replacement roofs, damp course repairs and any projects which would not be covered in day to day maintenance. Planned maintenance includes external and internal redecoration, whilst we would consider minor works to be such things as leaks, door locks, window repairs etc.

What IT facilities do you have?

Our IT facilities are very comprehensive with a fully networked system. We have a website which has recently been modernised and updated, with a dedicated client area called My Block. Our accounting system is used by many agents and takes the accounts up to trial balance, which is reconciled on a monthly basis as well as an annual basis and then submitted to an outside independent accountant for verification and certification.

How do you keep up to date with the latest practices and legislation?

We have a full commitment to training with all managers having been on the CDM awareness course. We also provide in-house training, participate in online webinars from solicitors, and offer specific training courses where necessary. We are kept up to date on legislative changes by regulatory bodies such as NFoPP, ARMA and RICS.



Frequently Asked Questions: Fire and health & safety risk assessments

What is a 'risk assessment'?

A risk assessment is a systematic identification of all safety related hazards within the premises and is designed to analyse how those hazards may adversely affect the building and its occupants. It should identify the level of risk that those hazards may present and also identify suitable control measures for any significant findings. As part of the assessment, an action plan should be formulated with reasonable timescales assigned for the implementation of any necessary remedial action. The risk assessment can examine a specific hazard, such as fire, or can encompass a number of more general areas, as with the 'General Health and Safety Risk Assessment'.

Why do I need a risk assessment for my building?

The 'legally responsible person' (In the case of residential blocks this is normally the landlord, or the managing agent), must arrange for a competent person to carry out 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments for all those areas that they have control of.

For fire safety, The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which came into force on 1st October 2006, requires that all buildings (other than single domestic dwellings) should have an assessment carried out and all significant findings should be recorded. This includes the 'common areas' of residential blocks.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 specify measures necessary to comply with more general health and safety requirements.

Who should carry out the assessment?

Only somebody with an appropriate level of knowledge and experience regarding the legislation, relevant safety standards to be applied and the principles of risk assessment should undertake the assessment(s). This person must be able to make appropriate judgements regarding risk and recommend suitable measures to eliminate, or manage these risks. This person is known as the 'competent person' and in most cases this will be a safety professional. In some premises (normally larger commercial organisations) this expertise may be available 'in-house'.

It is the responsibility of the 'responsible person', to ensure that they appoint a 'competent person' to help them to fulfil their legal obligations.

What should the assessment cover?

The fire risk assessment should identify any/all threats to the safety of the building and its occupants from fire. In practical terms this would include assessment of the following areas:

- Ignition sources
- Combustibles
- Premises layout and construction
- People at risk
- Fire detection and alarm systems
- Firefighting provision
- Escape facilities
- Fire safety signage
- Emergency lighting
- Fire emergency plan
- Training/information
- Testing and maintenance of fire safety systems

For more general health and safety assessments, the survey should cover the following;

- General maintenance and upkeep
- Ventilation
- Lighting
- Accumulation of waste materials
- Condition of floors
- External walkways
- Falls from height and falling objects
- Stairs and handrails
- Fixed glazing
- Separation of vehicles and pedestrians
- Smoking
- Health and safety signage
- Electrical equipment
- Noise
- Hazardous substances
- Control of contractors
- Water supplies
- Asbestos

What happens once the assessment is complete?

Once the assessment is complete, any 'significant findings' must be recorded in writing and any/all persons who may be affected by the assessment should be informed accordingly. In addition, an action plan should be formulated with regard to the implementation of any necessary remedial action. The action plan should specify exactly what is to be achieved, by whom and within what timescale. The action plan should be continually kept up to date and should provide a full audit trail facility for management and enforcing authorities.

When should the assessment be reviewed?

The assessment should be reviewed 'whenever it is considered to be no longer valid'. In practical terms this means following any significant change to the occupancy, or layout of the building, following any safety related incident, or near miss, or at periodic intervals as stated within the assessment (generally considered to be 12 monthly, for normal risk buildings). To assume that no changes have occurred and therefore a review is not necessary is not considered sufficient to comply with the legislation and a formal review process should be undertaken. The review process should be used as confirmation of those actions that have been implemented since the last assessment date and to properly assess any additional hazards that may have been introduced.

What will happen if I don't carry out an assessment?

The main risk with not carrying out safety assessments is that you will be unaware of any hazards that could affect the safety of the occupants or cause damage to the building. This could result in serious injury, death and/or significant financial loss. In addition, as already highlighted, it is a legal requirement to carry out risk assessments and to manage the findings; failure to do so could lead to enforcement action being taken with fines and/or custodial sentences being handed out for more serious breaches. Additionally, insurance companies may not provide cover for those buildings where risks have not been properly evaluated and controlled.