

WHITEPAPER

Fire safety systems: How confident are you in the quality of your building's maintenance?

Building owners face the unenviable task of providing workplaces that support tenant activities on a continuing basis. More importantly, they must ensure that their building is safe to occupy.

Much time and effort has been spent developing appropriate standards for building maintenance, and this is particularly the case with regard to fire services and other essential safety measures. As such, these standards are very prescriptive and are linked to government regulations that impose a legal framework on the design and maintenance of these building safety systems.

Considering the regulations around these essential safety systems and the potential repercussions of poor building maintenance, it would be reasonable to assume that building maintenance tasks are tracked, reported on and carried out with a great amount of diligence.

Surprisingly, this is not the case.

A process too far

Despite the level of detail that building and maintenance standards articulate, there is still a wide variety of interpretations and outcomes across the industry, all of which stem from an inefficient process.

The current system for capturing building maintenance information involves recording information in a log book, which must be kept at each individual site. Often, these records need to be accessed, along with records from previous years. Already, we can see that the process for reconciling these hard copy documents is inefficient, as everything from the collection of data through to the analysis must be done manually. Consequently, this method of data extraction bears a significant time cost.

If you do need to extract your data, how can you be sure it paints the right picture? Can you verify that the technician attended the right site and captured what they were there for?

This lack of process muddies the visibility between contractors and businesses they work for, which can mean three things:

1. You are most likely paying for work that hasn't actually been done;
2. There is a safety risk for tenants occupying your building; and
3. You remain liable for any consequences of poor maintenance.

All of these things occur for one simple reason – you don't know if the work was done or that there is a problem that needs to be fixed.

Our data indicates that maintenance on several safety systems such as sprinklers, fire alarms and fire hydrants falls well under 100% compliance, yet it is likely that most building owners are paying for 100% of these tests regardless of actual performance outcomes

How to fix a problem you don't know you have

The timeless saying, “what gets measured gets managed”, absolutely rings true in the repairs and maintenance industry. But in order to measure and manage, data first needs to be easily and readily accessible from multiple sites. To ensure you are meeting your obligations, you must build an environment where it's easy for you to:

- Analyse your data;
- Remove manual processes as much as possible;
- Ensure that work was actually completed, on time; and
- Transfer information between departments
(e.g. operations to accounts payable), before your bills are paid.

By connecting every step; the contractor to the data, and the data to accounts, you will have complete visibility of all repairs and maintenance work, and can be confident that your obligations to safety have been met.

It's not so hard in the digital age

With so many records across so many locations, it's obvious that the process needs to go digital – and it can. By capturing data online, access to information is achievable in a matter of seconds (not weeks!).

It's no longer enough just to have online data analysis, the data capture process itself must be handled via technology. Contractors input data into a mobile form, which is then time stamped, location mapped. The data is then sent straight to the server.

Well-designed mobility solutions are not only more convenient, but they vastly improve data quality; contractors can't proceed unless all fields are filled in, location mapping ensures the right work is done at the right location and written data is much clearer.

This streamlined process then allows visibility to other departments in your organisation, such as the accounts team. They can then verify work completed to allow for the reconciliation of invoiced tasks against tasks actually completed. They can also see whether the tasks that were completed were done so in the correct timeframe.

Verified has been collecting field data since 2004. We have captured over 1 million test sheets from more than 40,000 sites across Australia. From these 1 million test sheets, 62 million data records have been created, including:

- The pass, fail or N/A for every test sheet question
- Every defect noted
- The date of every test
- Voltages, pressure readings, flow test results and more

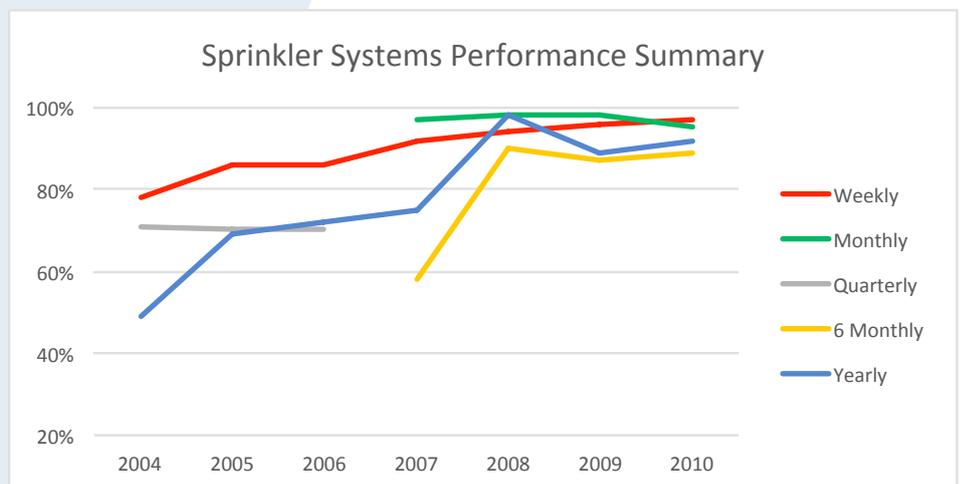
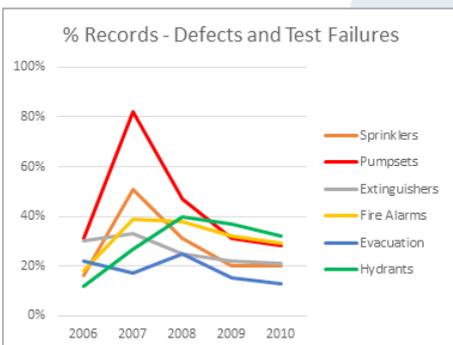
Unlike previous results, these results are not anecdotal.

Ignorance is far from bliss

It's an obvious truth – accurate reporting will lead to better business decisions. The transparency that companies will now have from contractors will ensure that they can easily assess the quality of information that is being recorded in order to:

- Change behaviour
- Improve performance
- Increase efficiency

Our data shows that by having effective tracking and control mechanisms in place, the incidents of defects and test failures can be reduced significantly over time.



Not only is compliance improved, but you will have complete visibility over all billed tasks, meaning you will save money by only paying for the work that was actually done.

With increased compliance comes a reduced risk in being held liable, should one of these safety systems fail in the event of an emergency. More importantly, building owners can be confident that their tenants are occupying a safe environment, with access to functioning safety equipment, should they ever need it.

If you think you might be paying for repairs and maintenance work that wasn't actually carried out, or if you're not confident that your building is 100% compliant with fire safety standards, call us on 1300 133 950.

We will discuss your current repairs and maintenance process, give you a free demo of the Verified process and restore your confidence in contractor integrity and the safety of your building and its tenants.