

Retrospective or Disorganised O&M Manuals

Problems arising from incomplete O&M Manuals or badly organised O&M Manual storage systems

The Problem:

There is a worrying increase in enquiries from owners and tenants who have either incomplete or disorganised O&M Manuals.

Incomplete O&M Manuals

If there is an unusable or incomplete O&M Manual or O&M Manual system then there is the possibility of incorrect maintenance or operation of equipment that could lead to accidents, reduced life expectancy or damage of equipment / materials. There could be legal ramifications and there would very likely be financial costs involved.

Inoperable O&M system

The problems arise either because a job has been signed off with incomplete manuals or a decent original O&M Manual has not been updated with details of later works, ie - there is no organisational system in place.

Who does this typically affect?

We have been called in to look at the UK HQ of one of the big four banks and a large government body, both of which had let things go to the point whereby the O&M Manuals are now a real problem and pretty much unusable. In one, there were well over 1000 physical files and 800 + discs in no order and located in various places around the building.

We are also presently working on completing O&M Manuals for completed jobs for one of the top 10 UK construction companies.

These are big players who really should be on top of these things so these problems are not confined to smaller companies who may not have the resources of the big boys.

The Solution:

Incomplete O&M Manuals

So, where incomplete O&M Manuals have been accepted at the end of a job, the obvious answer is that someone has to go back through them, check on what is missing and try to gather the outstanding info retrospectively.

Sorting out incomplete manuals often involves a degree of detective work trying to trace companies, people and the outstanding information. It's very often the case that what is needed to complete the manuals exists somewhere but finding it can be a real chore.

Inoperable O&M system

In the case of more work being done in the building and the O&M system not being able to cope, there will be a need for someone to go through all material, discarding the out of date stuff and reorganising the applicable material.

Agreeing to move to a digital only O&M system can help here as it means that the need to ensure that the printed material mirrors the electronic is removed.

Once it is agreed whether a printed or electronic O&M system (or both) is required, work can start on sorting out the mess. There is no easy way of doing this, so it will require some lucky person to go through all material cross referencing electronic with printed if required and noting down everything that is present.

Once the most recent and applicable versions have been identified printed material that is not available electronically can be scanned (if a digital system is agreed upon) or electronic info printed out until the electronic and printed info match (if both electronic and printed versions are required).

Both these fixes can be very time consuming and costly not to mention extremely tedious. But, one thing is certain; getting it done sooner rather than later is essential. The longer that it is left to try to complete a partially done manual, the more chance that the various parties who will need contacting or the info you will be requiring will have disappeared. Whereas a badly organised O&M system will only get more of a mess as time goes by and more information is piled into it.

How to avoid it in the first place

As with most problems to do with O&M Manuals, it's pretty simple to avoid them with just a little time and effort. The issue as always is that they tend to slip down everyone's list of priorities to the point where they just get forgotten.

The answer is simply to allocate funds and resources to ensure that the manuals are done properly in the first place and that they are kept organised thereafter.

As with all matters concerning O&M Manuals, simply making someone responsible for them and ensuring that that person has adequate time and resources should ensure that these problems do not occur. . . . and of course, pigs might fly!