Have you taken all "reasonable" steps to protect your Staff and Clients?

With staff returning back to work in the next few months, the emphasis on employers providing "safe" working spaces will be paramount.

Health Risks needs to be re-assessed

With thousands of "COVID-related" EL (Employer's Liability Claims) and PL (Public Liability Claims) going to Court this year, employers need to reconsider what air quality measures are "prudent", what constitutes "diligent", "demonstrating foresight" and what represents a "reasonable level of professionalism" when seeking to operate a "safe" working environment.

With COVID-19, the Health & Safety at Work 1974 Act Sections 2 & 3 and The Management of Health and Safety at Work 1999 Regulation 3, need to be urgently re-visited and new consideration given to what can reasonably and practicably be expected of those responsible for the safety of others.

Reasonably Practical

Firstly, what is "reasonably practical"? The last few months have firmly established that the virus is transmitted by airborne droplets that can remain in the air for more than 30 minutes, when there is an absence of adequate ventilation or suitable air purification systems. Coming into 2021, new air disinfection products have been announced that are easy to install, at low cost and most importantly have undergone clinical trials, proving their efficacy against the COVID 19 virus. Is there any reason why employers should not be deploying these systems out of a professional and legal duty of care?

## Constantly checking the effectiveness of air quality systems

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 2(6) requires a means for both the employer and employee to check the effectiveness of such measures. Very few air filter/disinfection systems have an integrated ability to monitor and display air quality readings. Parameters such a $PM_{2.5}$ & PM_{10} measure particulate levels in the air that correspond closely to the aerosol droplet sizes known to carry the coronavirus. VOC measures fumes and other volatile gas levels. CO_2 and CO are well known for their effects. But what is perhaps less widely appreciated is that the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus thrives at high and low humidity levels.

The Dashboard
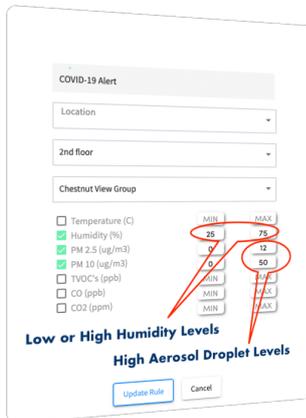
The new Dashboard App, now available in the UK from Aura Smart Air http://www.aurasmartair.co.uk, allows seven key indoor air quality parameters ($PM_{2.5}$, PM_{10}, VOC, CO, CO2, Humidity & Temperature) to be monitored in real-time and recorded in the cloud, to provide a full audit trail of the performance of every one of their Air Filter systems. Furthermore customised 'alerts' can be created to send e-mail messages to staff and management to warn them, not just of high $PM_{2.5}$ & PM_{10} levels, but also other situations which filter systems typically cannot rectify, such as high CO_2 levels, where the only effective solution is to open windows or doors.

In summary, there is now no excuse for a company or institution to not provide air filtration/disinfection/monitoring systems to protect both their staff and visitors. Post pandemic there will no doubt be an enhanced awareness of the influence of air quality on staff performance and health. On a commercial note, Insurance companies, in the near future, may offer reduced rates for those organisations pro-actively improving air quality inside their buildings and providing a full audit trail of critical events. They may even make such measures a condition precedent to insurance protection.
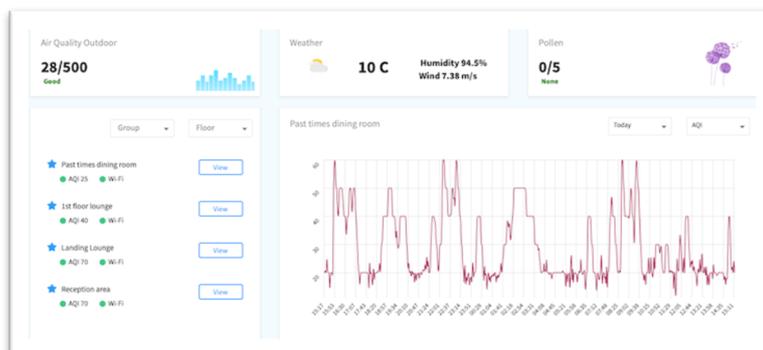
Full audit trail of air quality parameters and any critical alerts that have occurred over a 12 month period