Your guide to standardising Permit to Work procedures:

Fostering a culture of safety and operational excellence

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Permits to Work (PTWs) play a crucial role in the management of the built environment and regulating high-risk activities such as maintenance, repair, and construction. However, without uniform PTW processes this can lead to inefficiencies, miscommunication, and increased safety risks. If a property management company adopts a new accounting system to ensure compliance and minimise financial errors, the question is why would they not standardise their PTW system?

This white paper explores the importance of standardising PTWs in property management companies, delving into the benefits, key components, and implementation strategies to enhance safety and operational effectiveness.

1

Why are PTWs important?

Permits to Work (PTWs) are formal documents that authorise high-risk tasks in the built environment. In the property and facilities management sector, where activities range from routine maintenance to complex refurbishment projects, PTWs are essential for ensuring safety, compliance, and risk management. Without standardised procedures, PTW processes can vary significantly between projects, departments, or even individuals within the same organisation. This lack of uniformity poses challenges in communication, compliance, and safety.
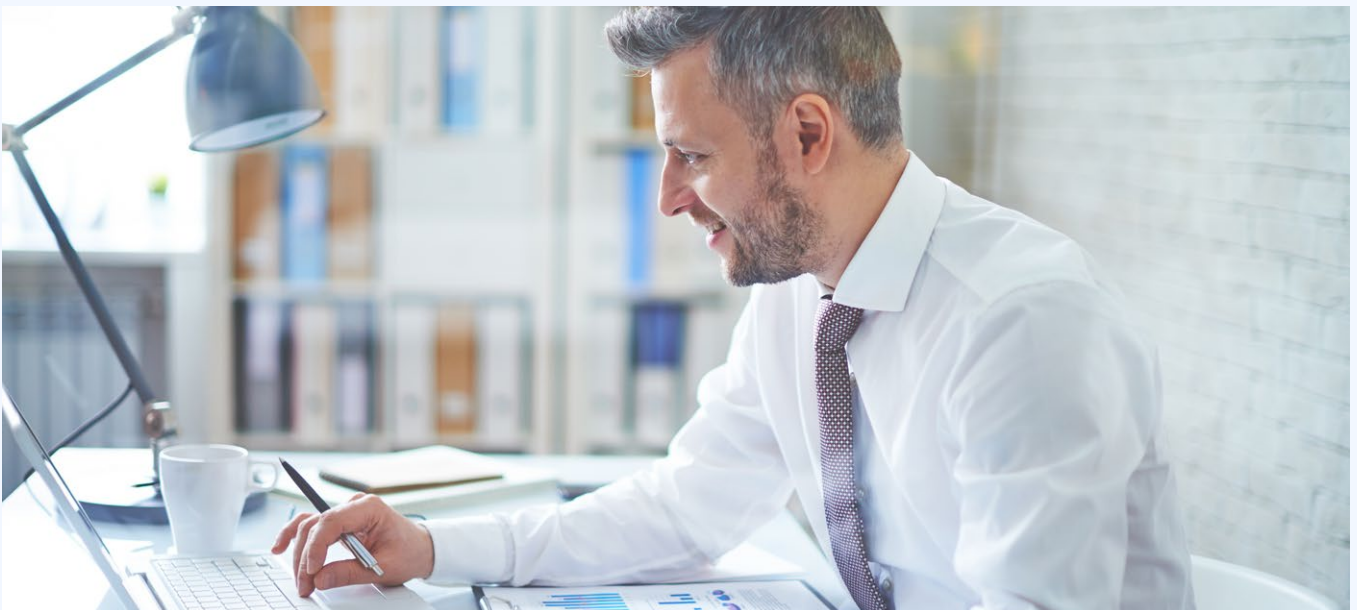
For a company to state, 'The operation of a Permit to Work system is part of a company's risk management regime', does not guarantee it is widely used. Every user needs to support the process, but how can you establish the situation? TAP stores data that can explain how widely a Safe System of Work (SSoW) is being used.

An example using comparative data can offer the reassurance: Company 1 and Company 2, both share similar management profiles and portfolio sizes. In the initial year of operation for Company 1, over 14,000 permits were raised. For Company 2, and comparing the same timeframe, the company could only demonstrate raising just over 850 permits. Which one of these companies would you feel comfortable working with, knowing they operate a SSoW?

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What issues can arise when a consistent PTW system is not in place?

Inconsistency

PTW processes differ across companies and properties, resulting in confusion and inconsistency. Different interpretations of safety requirements may result in varied levels of risk mitigation which could either result in you putting your name to too many unnecessary permits – costing time and money – or not permitting when required, resulting in possible health and safety breaches.

Increased safety risks

Inconsistent PTW procedures can result in overlooked hazards or inadequate risk assessments. This miscommunication or misunderstanding may lead to accidents, injuries, or property damage which could have implications for tenant retention in the long-run.

According to data collected by the HSE, over 40% of accidents in the workplace came from Slips, trips or falls on the same level and Falling from a height in 2022/23.

Source: https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causinj/index.htm

Lack of compliance

Non-standardised PTW processes may fail to meet current regulations or industry best practice. Inadequate documentation or record-keeping can also lead to compliance issues or legal liabilities. If something goes wrong, you need to consider if you will have the right documentation to fight a legal claim and prove you made the necessary risk assessments at the time. Ask yourself 'Do your Hot Work Permits comply with RC7: Risk control for hot work?' TAP is finding Landlord insurers are beginning to take a closer look at how contractors are being managed on site when critical monitoring equipment is being isolated.

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How can your properties benefit from a standardised and automated PTW system?

Enhanced safety

Standardised PTW processes ensure potential hazards are identified, assessed, and actions are taken to reduce risk of accidents or incidents.

Save time and money

A consistent approach streamlines PTW workflows, reducing administrative overhead and processing time. Consistent procedures also facilitate better planning, resource allocation, and task execution. Overall, you can save time and money by improving your process and taking the manual elements away from it.

Meet compliance obligations

Standardised PTW processes help ensure that all activities meet regulatory requirements and industry best practice. Comprehensive documentation and formulated procedures simplify audits and inspections.

Clearer communication

Uniformly presented PTW documents and procedures improve communication among stakeholders by providing a familiar format for conveying task requirements, hazards, and risk mitigation measures. It also helps limit misunderstandings, errors, and conflicts, enhancing collaboration and coordination among project teams.

TAP anticipates each permit raised saves the approver 20 mins of their time by moving the requirement to complete the paperwork over to the contractor. Based on a Facilities Manager salary of £50,000 per annum, using the TAP Permit Module could save a company over £9,000 in time for every 1,000 permits raised and approved. Return on investment is made in the first few months of having the system in place.

Better risk management

Standardised PTW systems enable comprehensive risk assessment and control by providing structured frameworks and guidelines. By systematically identifying and evaluating hazards, organisations can implement appropriate control measures to mitigate risks to an acceptable level, protecting both people and property.

Streamlined training

PTW procedures simplify training by providing consistent guidelines. Employees and contractors can receive effective training on PTW requirements, hazard awareness, and risk mitigation strategies, ensuring that all personnel have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their tasks safely and efficiently.

Continuous improvement

Standardised PTW systems support continuous improvement initiatives by providing a structured framework for monitoring, review, and feedback. Organisations can identify areas for improvement, implement corrective actions, and incorporate lessons learned from incidents or near misses, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

How to create a consistent PTW process

Identify hazardous tasks

Clearly define tasks that require a PTW, such as working at height, hot work, electrical, isolations or confined space categories. Identify potential hazards associated with each task and assess associated risks.

Implement risk assessment and method statements

Firstly, impose the quality of risk assessments that identify and evaluate potential hazards, and then implement control measures to mitigate identified risks to an acceptable level.

Establish authorisation procedures

Define clear criteria for authorising PTWs, including the roles and responsibilities of approvers. Make visible the competencies and qualifications of those workers involved in high-risk tasks.

Communicate the process

Ensure effective communication of PTW requirements to all relevant stakeholders, including employees, contractors, and tenants. Establish the procedure for notifying affected parties of planned activities and associated risks.

Implement training

Identify the necessary training for personnel involved in PTW processes, including hazard awareness, risk assessment, and PTW procedures. Ensure ongoing competency assessment and refresher training to keep people up to date.

Monitor the data and review your processes

Implement mechanisms for monitoring PTW compliance and effectiveness through captured data. Conduct regular reviews and audits to identify areas for improvement and ensure continuous compliance with standards and regulations.

Delivering the right support is vital in any service-related profession and the delivery of Permits to Work is no exception. Data allows you to make informed decisions.

Making sure you have the appropriate amount of resource on the right day is sensible management. Where approved Permits to Work are for periods longer than one day, the preferred work start day is Monday, property maybe busier and perhaps adequate monitoring is in place. For single day Permits to Work, the preferred work start day is Saturday, a quieter property, but maybe less monitoring is on hand. Preparation and communication are key requirements when works are being carried out in any built environment and knowing these two facts allows you to plan for the necessary resource.

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How to successfully implement your PTW process

Senior management sponsorship

Gaining buy-in from senior management will be important to successfully implement your new PTW process. You could create a management committee to support the project and believe in the deliverable benefits.

Establish a standardised PTW framework

Develop standard templates, procedures, and guidelines for PTW processes. Ensure alignment with legislative requirements and industry best practices.

Train and educate staff and contractors

Provide comprehensive training on the standard PTW procedures and requirements. Promote awareness of the importance of PTWs and safety culture among all stakeholders.

Integrate with existing management systems

Integrate PTW processes with existing management systems, such as maintenance or health and safety management systems. Where possible ensure seamless data exchange and compatibility between systems to enhance efficiency and data integrity.

Set regular reviews and updates

Establish a process for regular review and update of PTW procedures and documentation. Incorporate lessons learned from incidents, near misses, or changes in regulations or industry standards.

Continuous improvement initiatives

Encourage feedback from stakeholders to identify areas for improvement in PTW processes. Implement continuous improvement initiatives to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and safety.

Key take-aways

Standardising Permits to Work (PTWs) in property management is essential for enhancing safety, efficiency, and compliance. By implementing standardised PTW processes, property management companies can mitigate risks, improve communication, and ensure regulatory compliance.

TAP property management platform

The TAP property management platform includes the most comprehensive Permit to Work system for commercial properties of any size, ensuring your PTW procedure is applied rigorously, tracked in detail, and logged for future reference. It automates the entire process from contractor/tenant request to completion of the job and provides you with an audit trail – essential for when you need to gather evidence of work carried out safely. Notifications and prompts ensure the permit process is completed, and when linked up to TAP's visitor management system it can alert you to contractors that fail to turn up or those that have not signed RAMs.

Request a demo of the TAP Permit to Work system: contact hello@tap-in.co.uk or visit www.tap-in.co.uk for more information.

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