Flexibility, health and safety drive COVID-19 building investments

With the pandemic, facility managers have new concerns about building health, changing their motivation for building investments. Increasing building flexibility to respond to coronavirus and other emergency conditions was second in priority only to cost savings in driving investment during the pandemic.

Improving occupant health and safety while reducing energy costs during both pandemic and “new normal” occupancy conditions are also high priorities for these organizations.

The percentage of organizations saying that improving occupant health and wellness was an extremely or very important driver of investment increased from 62 percent to 74 percent in 2020.

85 percent said energy cost savings was an extremely or very important driver of investment.
Air treatments and ventilation represent top COVID-19 building investments

Industry, trade and public health organizations have recommended various changes to indoor spaces to help control the spread of the virus. In addition to increasing work schedule flexibility and reducing occupancy density, more than half of organizations have performed indoor air quality assessments, introduced elevated temperature scanning systems, and increased air filtration.

COVID-19-related building investments

- Increase work schedule flexibility
- Perform an indoor air quality assessment
- Introduce occupant elevated temperature scanning systems
- Reduce occupant density
- Increase air filtration
- Install air treatment system (e.g., UV-C, bi-polar ionization)
- Increase outdoor air ventilation rates
- Recommission building systems and equipment
- Introduce touchless entry and access
- Add pre-scheduled occupant isolation rooms
- Introduce social distance tracking and tracing systems

COVID-19 did not significantly reduce building energy consumption, despite less occupancy

Increasing outdoor air ventilation and air filtration can significantly increase energy use depending on building type and locations. This creates real potential for energy efficiency. During the pandemic, less than 10 percent of organizations have experienced an energy use reduction of greater than 20 percent despite significantly reduced building occupancy.