

Cold, hard facts

Environmental management, climate change, sustainability, many of these words are things that most of us are aware of; you can't not be aware of it. For many however, it's very hard for this to be a relatable risk. Some may not even believe in climate change. So it's not likely you have it as a tangible risk on your company risk register. You don't plan for it or mitigate for it. Well you should! Here's why says GGF health, safety and environment manager

In late summer large parts of Europe has seen the worst floods in decades, the modern warning systems in Europe were overwhelmed, flooding in Brussels was described as once-in-a-generation floods. The Danube River now floods twice as often as its previous flooding of every 50 years, according to recent unpublished conducted with the German insurance industry.

In London, at the time of writing, many tube stations, DLR stations and roads are all badly flooded. Bart's Health NHS Trust declared a major incident. These images are starting to become common place in our twitter feeds and news channels. Writing in the *Independent* newspaper, Sir Brian Hoskins gave an example of the impact of warmer atmospheres on weather like this: "The number one thing to cling on to with this, is that an atmosphere that's warmer can hold more water vapour. If it is six degrees warmer it can hold 50% more water – so half as much again." Whilst this type of weather could be a freak event and scientists are wary of attaching it to climate change so soon, this type of weather being reported has become more common place, and therefore a tangible risk to your business.

An article in *Forbes: The Power of Purpose – the business case for purpose*, says: "According to the US business magazine *Inc.* millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by 2025 and they are looking for socially responsible employers."

On an almost daily basis we hear reports that installers and fabricators are struggling to recruit talent. There is clearly a skills shortage in our industry and that gives those seeking employment the advantage, they can pick and choose to work for an employer that reflects their values. Again in the *Forbes* article... "The *Cone Communications millennial employee study* found that 64% of millennials won't take a job if their employer doesn't have a strong CSR policy, and 83% would be more loyal to a company that helps them contribute to social and environmental issues."

It is clear that when you are looking for new talent in the future your sustainability principles and corporate social responsibility will potentially be deciding factors in many future employees' choices and decisions.

In Section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 it details the directors' duties, and most of us will know about the duties to the financial performance of the company and the benefit to its stakeholders, however, in the companies act it also states that directors must regard 'the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment', and movements like B Corporations and the Better Business Act are working hard to make the legal duties to social and environmental responsibilities stronger.



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Whether you like it or not, whether you believe in climate change or not, it is a risk, and a predictable one at that. Take time to consider how you can build capacity to absorb the physical affects like extreme heat or cold, or more topically, how flash flooding could affect your company. Don't say it's not likely, ask yourself if it does go wrong how bad will it be? If you don't like the answer to that question, then it's advisable to do something about it. That's how resilient companies operate, survive and thrive.

You can start working towards being a more social, ethical and sustainable company immediately. Many successful companies around the world use this as a main selling point. This isn't about deciding to be sustainable at the cost of business performance or revenue, it's about assessing risks and benefits and making gains towards your future. Those gains may be marginal, and that's better than nothing, but you need to start, by considering environmental performance and climate change and the risks to you and your business. ▣