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Smart infrastructure in the age of COVID-19

By: Faisal Kazi, CEO, Siemens Canada

The past months have upended the world of work like nothing we've seen in recent history. Now that workplaces across Canada are preparing for gradual reopening, employers are faced with a host of new logistics, policies, and, quite naturally, worries.

After being told to stay home and distance themselves from others, how can staff feel safe enough to return to – and even thrive in – this altered landscape of work? How can we address these concerns and bridge the gap between the old and new “normal”?

Getting Canada back to work – safely

With more than half of Canadians reporting that COVID-19 has negatively affected their mental health, employers' actions are critical to help ease some of this burden.

And while there isn't a one-size-fits-all playbook for how workplaces adjust to reopening, thankfully the technology exists to make our work environment smarter and more secure for everyone.

Reshaping the world of work

Imagine it's time to head out of the office for the day. You're not looking forward to standing in line at the elevator, waiting to see when a lift is free so you can keep a good social distance from others.

But, with the IoT app solution Comfy, you can check real-time elevator usage from your phone to see when a lift is available. The app will send you a notification when the elevator is safe to use, so you don't have to line up outside the elevator doors for an empty lift.

Intelligent sensors contribute in countless other ways to keeping indoor environments healthy and staff feeling confident in returning to the office. For instance:

- Ensuring safe distancing and appropriate facility density with sensors and analytics that manage how many people are in a building at one time
- Scanning occupants for evidence of elevated skin temperatures using thermal cameras
- Improving air quality and reducing viral spread with new HVAC maintenance strategies and advanced filtration
- Contact tracing using smart Bluetooth beacons, helping identify anyone who came into contact with someone who has been infected



“From social distancing and space optimization to remote operations and service, Siemens is committed to partnering with Canadian businesses and institutions to assist in the back-to-work transition – with smart buildings solutions.”

Empowering employees

Three in five Canadians say they will be more cautious about personal contact to avoid getting sick after COVID-19. And while an individual's habits are crucial to stopping the spread of viruses, employers can empower their staff even further by giving them the ability to control their own environment.

Building a resilient workplace

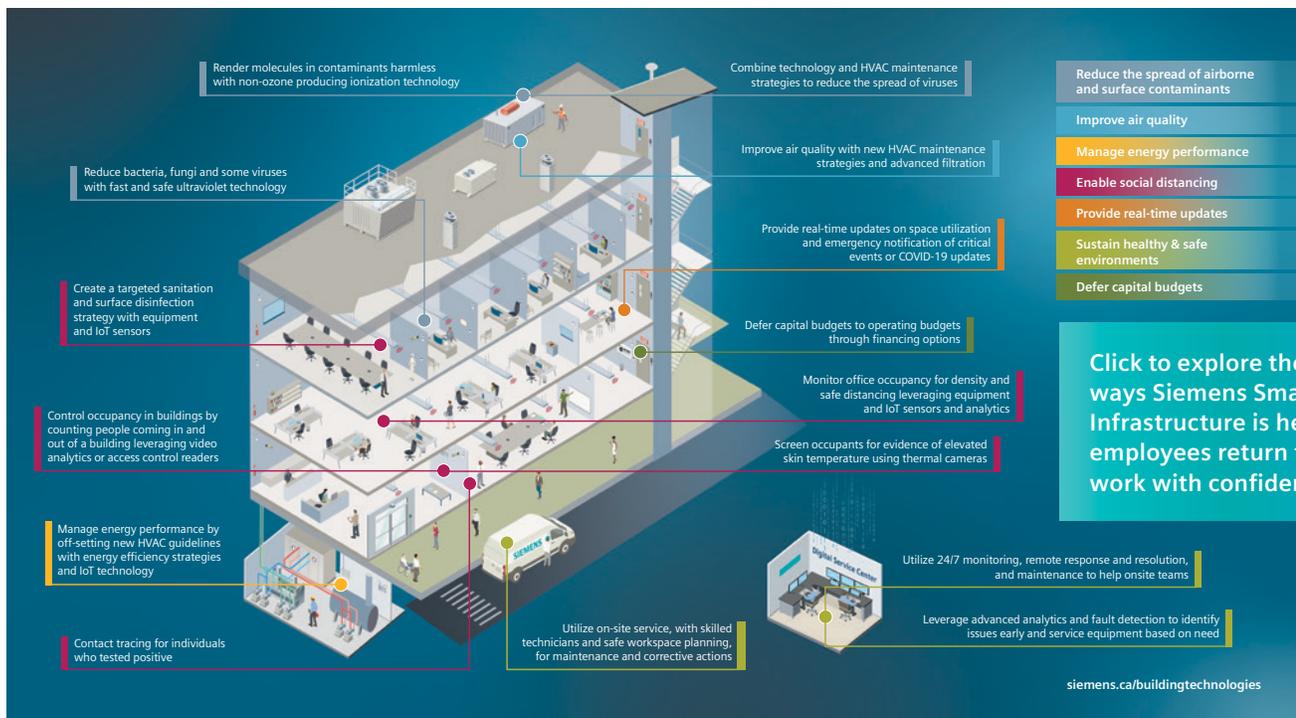
These technologies have immediate benefits in the short term for our return to work, but they will continue to play an important role in workplaces once COVID-19 has receded or a vaccine is readily available.

Many public health authorities around the world have said that we will likely be living with COVID-19 for a while to come – and could see flareups as early as this fall or winter. What's more, this type of virus may not be an isolated occurrence; workplaces need to be prepared for future disruptions.

The Siemens Workplace app keeps employees informed, safe and productive. From social distancing through configurable desk booking to helping staff find and select amenities to prevent overcrowding, the app delivers transparency, valuable information and peace of mind, directly to employees.

As my colleague Cedrik Neike, CEO of Siemens Smart Infrastructure, writes, if a pandemic were to hit again, "Sensors could help us continue to work in the office and meet in public by enabling social distancing. They can quantify the density in any given area at any given time, making sure people keep their distance and avoid overcrowding. This means we may not have to shut entire cities and countries in the future."

"Creating a more resilient workplace gives you the confidence in your business' ability to weather whatever disruptions could be on the horizon. More importantly, it gives your employees security and trust that their health is protected today and into the future."



We're with you through this (at a two-metre distance, of course)

Siemens in Canada is a trusted partner to businesses and institutions, but we are also an employer to around 5,000 strong across the country.

Some of our employees who have been working from home during the pandemic could be heading back to the office in the coming weeks or months. And many of my colleagues have been on the frontlines

throughout this crisis, ensuring that Canada's critical infrastructure continues to operate and essential services are delivered.

Smart building technology at our own facilities will help us keep our colleagues in every role safe, confident, and secure.

Together, let's keep yours that way, too.

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