

'Making Good': The Process of Restoring Leased Archives Premises

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This article describes some of the processes involved in 'making good' leased premises – restoring them to their original condition after they have been vacated. Making good is a requirement of most commercial leases and can sometimes be an expensive exercise.

Introduction

One of the side effects of moving your archives when your former premises have been leased is 'making good'. This means restoring the premises to the condition they were in before you occupied them. The process of making good is generally a requirement of any commercial lease and must be done at your expense.

For example, you may have leased several floors of a large multistorey building. You have been there for a number of years and in that time you have partitioned your space into a number of smaller areas. You have added public reading facilities. You may have installed display cases in the foyer, and an amenities room for your staff and visitors. You may have included storage facilities too – with expanses of mobile or static shelving – and had these facilities encompassed with special fire-rated partitioning.

When you move out you will not only have to remove all of your property – loose items of furniture such as desks, computers, as well as your record holdings – you will also have to make good your former premises. The level of work required will depend on the conditions of your lease, how much wear and tear the premises sustained during your tenancy and whatever leeway you can negotiate with the building owner.

In an ideal situation you could negotiate with the owner that you leave your premises as they are if the changes are likely to be useful to the next tenant. This option of course saves you both the expense and effort of having to make good. Or, as an alternative, you could offer the owner a one-off cash settlement in lieu of undertaking any further work. In effect, the building owner would then own your fittings and you can walk away without any further responsibility.

Another possibility is that the owner might say that only the amenities room with its cupboards and sink that you installed at your expense will be suitable for the next tenant so can stay. They might also say that everything you have installed must be removed and the premises restored to their pre-lease condition. In effect, the premises need to be gutted.

A worst-case scenario such as this can be a particularly expensive exercise, as you will have to remove all partitioning, fittings and cabling. You'll have to remove mobile shelving, the tracks and false floors if you've had them installed too, repair any damage to the walls and ceilings when the partitions are removed, and attend to the floor coverings as well. Such a scenario doesn't just apply to multistorey buildings. It will also hold true if you've leased a warehouse or similar facility. You should factor in the costs of making good as part of the overall costs for your move.

These are some of the issues that should be covered in a typical 'make good' scope of work.¹ They should be discussed with any contractor who is being asked to quote to do the work.

Partitions and other fixtures

All partitions and doors should be removed. This will include solid partitions and those that include glass. Remember that if you've had acoustic partitions installed they will probably extend through the false ceiling into the concrete slab above, so their removal will be more costly. So too will be the removal of solid fire-rated partitions that you may have installed around your storage areas.

All smaller partitions installed around work areas should be removed, including individual work stations which will usually have cabling – for power,

computers and telephones – running through them. Counters and shelves will need to be removed too.

All amenities room fittings should be removed, including benches, cupboards, wall tiles, wallpaper, hot water systems, general plumbing and taps.

All pictures and notice boards should be taken down, holes in the walls should be patched, and the walls cleaned.

All power poles installed in open plan areas should be removed and the cabling that runs through them. You may have to repair the carpet and the ceiling tiles after the poles have gone.

Ceilings

Any ceiling tiles that are missing or cracked will need to be replaced or repaired. Remember that the removal of power poles and partitioning – particularly acoustic or fire-rated partitions – can often damage existing tiles.

Airconditioning

Any local airconditioning systems that you installed will need to be removed.

Installing, and later removing, office partitioning can often interfere with the way in which an airconditioning system distributes conditioned air through an area. If during the life of your tenancy you have installed a large amount of partitioning, then you will probably have to arrange to have the premises' principal airconditioning system balanced at your expense after the partitions have been removed. This simply means ensuring that the appropriate amount of conditioned air is flowing through the system and into all areas.

Airconditioning systems are often referred to under the heading 'Mechanical' in building specifications and other documentation.

Fire services

Any fire suppression systems you may have installed, eg a gas flood system for a film store, will need to be removed as will the pipework and controls.

The sprinkler system may need to be adjusted to comply with the new open-plan floor layout. Some sprinkler heads may need relocation. Any hand-held extinguishers that you may have installed will need to be removed. The work will need to include the identification signs and wall brackets, as well as the repair of the walls when the signs and brackets have been removed.

If there is an emergency warning and intercommunication system (EWIS) the ceiling speakers that form part of the system may need relocation after the partitioning has been removed.

If you've installed an early warning smoke detection system (eg *VESDA*) this will need to be removed as will the system's pipework and controls.

You will need to ensure that the premises meet current fire safety codes after you have removed all evidence of your tenancy.

Security

All security systems that you've installed will have to be removed. This will include control panels, cameras, motion detectors, swipe card readers, press button combination locks, electric door strikes, reed switches and similar items, as well as all wiring.

Lighting, data and communications

Any light fittings and diffusers that are missing or defective will need to be replaced or repaired.

Light switches, dimmers and power points may need relocating after the partitions have been removed and all wiring made safe.

All computer and local telephone cabling, and any electrical wiring for special lighting or security purposes, will need to be removed. Telephone connections may need to be relocated after the partitions have been removed.

Painting

All remaining walls and doors (and columns too if present) will probably need painting. The removal of partitioning can often damage walls and columns, so some repainting, as well as patching, will be needed.

Shelving, racking and bookcases

All mobile and static shelving, plan cabinets, as well as any built-in shelving units, racking or bookcases, will need to be removed. So too will shelving tracks (rails) and the small concrete plinths that hold the tracks in place, if you have been using tracks placed above ground.

The installation and removal of raised tracks usually causes some damage to the true floor. Shelving tracks require the inclusion of bolts to hold them in

place and these bolts are drilled into the floor. When they are removed a series of holes will probably be evident, and damage such as this will have to be repaired.

False floors

If you've had false floors installed they will have to be removed. This is particularly relevant in computer suites or conservation areas where there may be cabling or fire protection systems located under the floor which have to be removed too.

False floors installed to cover shelving tracks in your storage areas will have to be removed when the tracks are removed.

Floor coverings

All carpets will need to be cleaned and repaired and may need replacement if there has been excessive wear and tear.

Vinyl floors will need washing and any tears repaired. Tiled floors will need washing and any cracked or broken tiles will need to be replaced.

Lift lobby

If you have occupied the entire floor of a building, or an entire warehouse, then the lift (elevator) lobby area is your responsibility too.

All signage identifying your occupancy will have to be removed and any reception desks or counters, together with communication and security systems attached to them.

If you've installed display cases or any special lighting (spotlights or downlights) they will need to be removed, and the walls and ceiling repaired.

General appearance and exterior

All windows will need to be cleaned, as will the curtains and blinds. There should be a general clean up and removal of all garbage, both within the building and the external grounds. If there are gardens or lawns they will have to be trimmed and dead matter – branches, leaves, etc – removed.

If you've occupied a warehouse or similar facility and you've installed identifying signs within the building's grounds or on fences and gates, these will have to be removed.

And naturally, the contractors undertaking the make good have to remove all evidence of their work.

Disconnection of services

As part of the make good process don't forget that any contracts and services involving your premises should be terminated or relocated to your new premises. This will include telephone and mail, cleaning, security and maintenance. You should also arrange for final readings for your telephone, electricity, water and gas services.

Final inspection

When the work has been completed you should then arrange for a final inspection with the owner or their representative, and the contractor that undertook the make good, to ensure that the condition in which you are leaving the premises is to everyone's satisfaction.

And hopefully when all this has been done you should then truly be able to vacate the premises.

ENDNOTE

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