COMMERCIAL RENOVATION

What has to come out when you reinstate your shop or office?

By DirectHome Editorial Updated 29 November 2026 8 min read Explore our commercial renovation service ↗

Whatever your lease's reinstatement clause lists has to come out, so ask your landlord to set out the detail in writing. That can include partitions, false ceilings, flooring and wiring you added. Taking out sprinklers, exit signs or wiring can also bring in a Qualified Person and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), or a licensed electrical worker, so plan those first.

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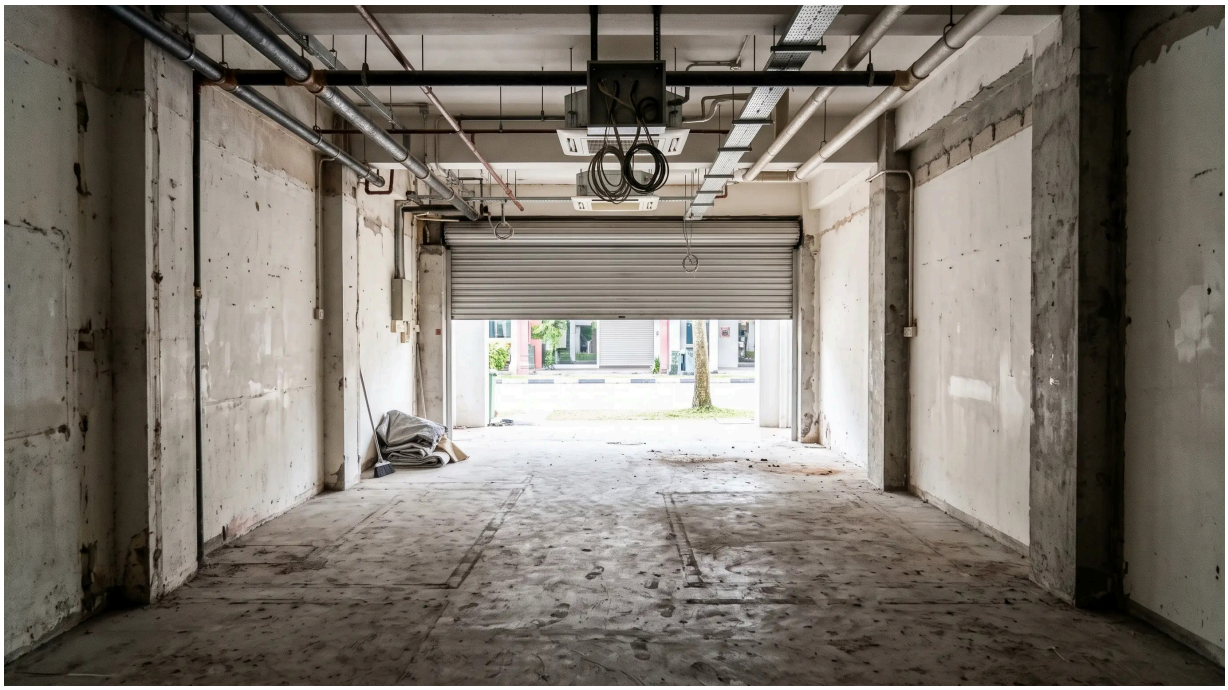

Here's how to get that list, who has to handle each part, and how to time it against your handover date. Our commercial renovation service quotes reinstatement from your lease, and our hacking and demolition service covers taking out partitions, ceilings and floors that aren't structural.

What reinstatement means for your unit

Reinstatement puts the unit back the way your lease says it goes back. Words like "original condition" and "bare shell" mean what your lease and the records from when you took the unit describe, so read the clause, and find the floor plan, drawings or photos from your move-in.

If you lease from JTC Corporation, JTC says you are required to reinstate your premises before returning them on the lease expiry date. After a joint site inspection, it tells you the reinstatement requirements, taking into account the reinstatement obligations in your lease.

For an HDB shop or office, HDB says you need to restore the premises to its original condition, including removal of all furniture, fixtures and fittings, in line with your tenancy agreement. If you don't, HDB carries out the reinstatement works and recovers the costs from you.

In a mall or a private office building, ask the landlord or its managing agent for the list, and check it against your lease. The building's renovation rules can also set the working hours and how the lift and corridors are protected, so get those too.

Get the reinstatement list in writing first

Quotes, approvals and your timetable all hang on one document, the landlord's list of what comes out and what can stay. Ask for it in writing, and ask about each of these.

Ask your landlord in writing

- ☐ Each item that has to come out, such as partitions, false ceilings, floor finishes, signage, added wiring, sinks and pipes
- ☐ Anything you'd like to leave, such as a floor in good condition, and whether the landlord accepts it
- ☐ How the walls, floor and ceiling should be left where something comes out
- ☐ The date the unit must be handed back, and when the joint inspection is
- ☐ Who signs the unit off, and what they need to see before they do

Use this blank checklist to record your project review.

Before you leave a floor you think is in good condition, get the landlord's agreement in writing. If the list says it comes out, have it priced to come out.

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Tell us what you need on WhatsApp and send a few photos. We'll arrange a free site assessment, then give you a fixed-price quote within 3 to 5 working days.

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Who has to handle each part of the fit-out

Taking a fit-out apart isn't one trade. Some items come out with nothing more than the landlord's list, and others bring in someone the law names.

Who comes in for each part of a typical shop or office fit-out. Your landlord's list decides which rows apply to you.

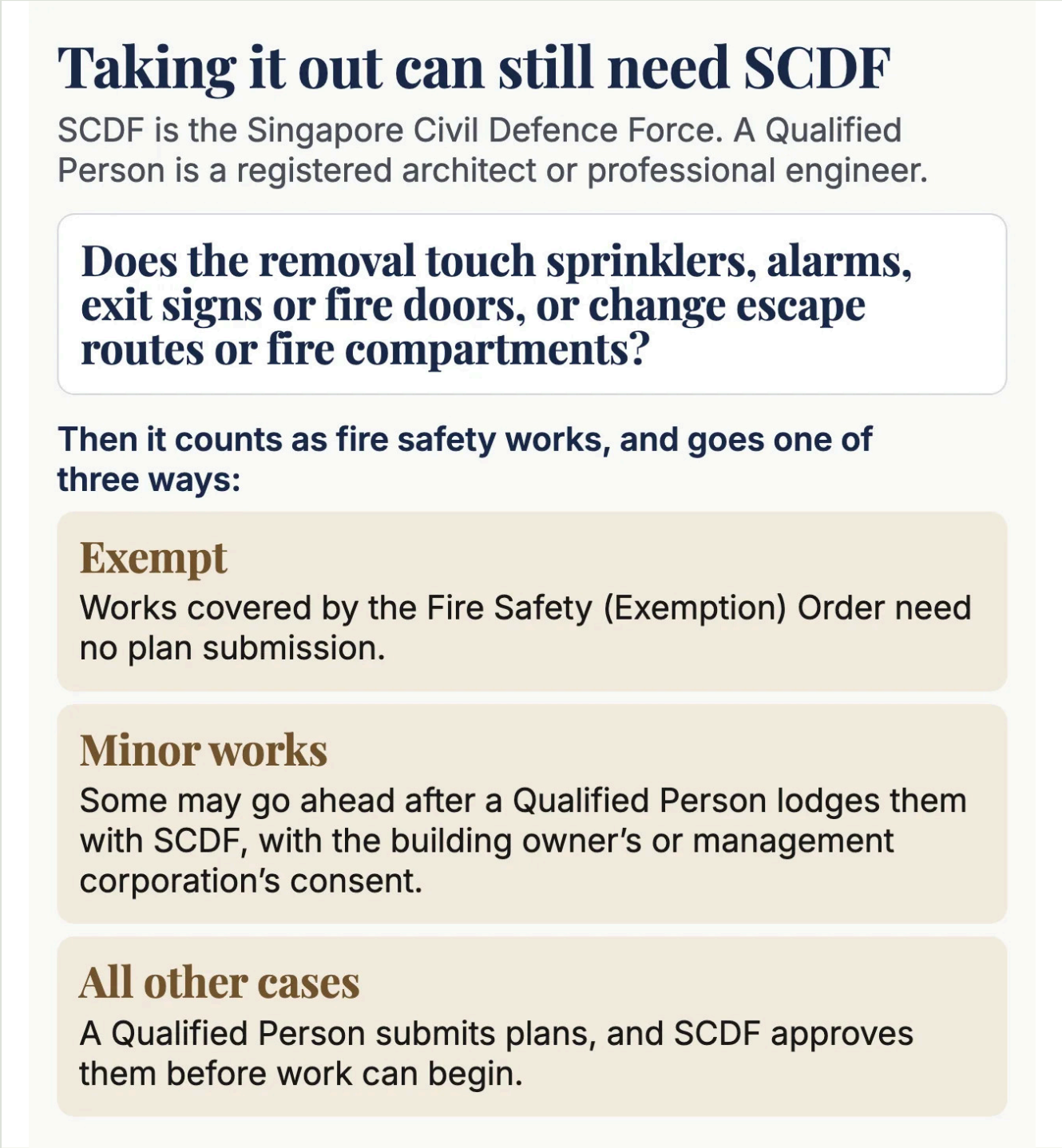
What comes out	What the rules add	Who handles it
Partitions that carry only their own weight	Demolishing or reinstating a non-load bearing wall is on the Building Control Regulations' list of insignificant building works, which the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) exempts from a permit	The demolition contractor, once the wall is confirmed to carry nothing but itself
False ceilings holding sprinklers, smoke detectors or exit signs	Removing or relocating fire protection systems counts as fire safety works	A Qualified Person, who submits plans or lodges the works with SCDF first, unless the works are exempt
Partitions or doors that change escape routes or fire compartments (the sections of a building built to hold a fire back)	Also fire safety works, including replacing fire doors	A Qualified Person, as above
Wiring, sockets, lighting or a sub board (a smaller switchboard) you added	Any work on an electrical installation is electrical work	A licensed electrical worker, or someone working under one
Anything that may be structural, such as a mezzanine floor	Building works outside BCA's insignificant list need a permit	An engineer, who assesses it first

What comes out	What the rules add	Who handles it
Debris, old furniture and fittings	Construction and renovation debris is general waste	A collector holding a General Waste Collector's Licence from the National Environment Agency (NEA)

For walls, the Building Control Regulations list the demolition, restoration or reinstatement of any non-load bearing wall among insignificant building works, and a non-load bearing wall is one that supports no load other than its own weight. BCA says a permit is required for all building works, except for those classified as insignificant building works.

If there's any doubt about what a wall or a mezzanine carries, have it checked before anyone hacks it. Where a reinstatement needs that, we arrange the engineer.

Taking out a fit-out can still need SCDF



Removing sprinklers, alarms, exit signs or fire doors is fire safety work, even though nothing new goes in. Settle the SCDF route before the work starts.

It's easy to assume removal needs no approval, because nothing new is going in. SCDF's plan approval page says that under the Fire Safety Act 1993, any person who intends to carry out fire safety works in a building must first obtain approval of plans from SCDF.

Those works include any installation, addition, alteration, removal or relocation of fire protection systems, such as hose reels, fire alarm panels, sprinklers, emergency exit signs and fire doors. They also include changes in the layout of spaces that affect escape routes, or works affecting fire compartments.

The plans are prepared and submitted by a Qualified Person, a registered architect or professional engineer, on behalf of the building owner or occupier. Works covered by the Fire Safety (Exemption) Order need no plan submission, and some minor works may proceed after a minor additions and alterations (MAA) lodgement; in all other cases, SCDF's plan approval is needed before work can begin.

For MAA works, SCDF says the applicant or tenant needs the consent of the building owner or management corporation before carrying out the works. When a removal touches the sprinklers, alarms or exits, we arrange the Qualified Person, so any submission SCDF needs is made before the work starts.

Wiring and debris have their own rules

The Electricity Act counts any work performed or carried out on any electrical installation as electrical work. It says an individual must not carry out electrical work unless they are a licensed electrical worker or act under the supervision of one, and that an owner or occupier of any premises who wishes to have any electrical work carried out there must not knowingly engage anyone who isn't allowed to do it.

So disconnecting and taking out the wiring, sockets and boards you added is electrical work, and by law it must be done by a licensed electrical worker or under one's supervision. If you'd like that arranged with the rest of the job, that's what our electrical works service is for.

NEA's code for waste collectors counts unwanted furniture, electrical appliances and construction and renovation debris as general waste, and says no person or company shall collect or transport general waste as a business without a valid General Waste Collector's Licence issued by NEA. Ask each quote who carts the debris away, and under whose licence.

Work back from your handover date



Under a JTC lease the dates are set for you, and a late finish costs double rent. Other leases set their own terms, so read those clauses early.

Under a JTC lease, the dates are set out for you. JTC says you get an email reminder 1 year before your lease expires, and it arranges a joint site inspection approximately 6 months before the lease expires.

Reinstatement works must be completed before the lease expiry date, and if they aren't, you are liable to pay double rent from that date. If your business used pollutive materials, you may also need an Environmental Site Assessment before you hand the unit back.

Those are JTC's terms. With any other landlord, your lease sets the notice, the inspection and what a late handover costs, so read those clauses now rather than in the last month.

We recommend working in this order, so nothing holds up the handover:

1. Get the landlord's written list, and agree anything that can stay.
2. Get any SCDF submission and the building's own approvals in place.
3. Have a licensed electrical worker disconnect and take out the added wiring.
4. Take out the fit-out, cart the debris away and make good (patch and repair) what stays.
5. Walk the unit at the joint inspection and fix anything it finds.
6. Hand back the keys before the lease ends.

Leave enough time before the lease ends to walk the unit twice, in case the first inspection finds something to fix.

What to ask for in a reinstatement quote

You can only compare quotes that price the landlord's list line by line. Give every contractor the same documents:

- The reinstatement clause from your lease
- The landlord's written list, or the notes from the joint inspection
- The floor plan or fit-out drawings from when you moved in
- Photos of the unit as you received it, if you have them
- The building's renovation rules and working hours
- Your handover date

Check each quote says

- ☐ Every item on the landlord's list, priced on its own line
- ☐ Who prepares any SCDF submission, and who the Qualified Person is
- ☐ That a licensed electrical worker handles the wiring
- ☐ Who carts the debris away, under whose General Waste Collector's Licence
- ☐ How walls, ceilings and floors are made good where something comes out

- [ ] How the lift and corridors are protected, as your building asks
- [ ] What's left out of the price

Use this blank checklist to record your project review.

If one quote leaves an item out, it isn't cheaper, it's pricing less of the list. For the approvals a fit-out needed going in, see which approvals a shop or office renovation needs, and the commercial renovation buying guide covers the lease clauses to read before you sign the next one. The hacking buying guide explains how demolition work is priced and planned.

Get the list priced well before your deadline

Send us the reinstatement clause and your landlord's list, and we'll do a free site assessment of the unit. We measure, note what each item needs, and send a fixed-price quote within 3 to 5 working days of the visit, never from a photo.

Our specialist does the removal work, and we supervise it through to handover, walking the unit with you before you hand it back. Where the list touches the fire safety systems or anything that may be structural, we arrange the Qualified Person or engineer.

Common questions

Can the next tenant take over my fit-out instead?

Ask your landlord, and if they agree, get it in writing, naming each item that stays. Anything the written agreement leaves out may still be on your reinstatement list.

How do I know whether a wall in my unit is structural?

Not by looking at it. A non-load bearing wall is one that supports no load other than its own weight, and that's for an engineer and the building's approved plans to settle. Ask your landlord or managing agent for the plans, and have it checked before it's hacked.

More on commercial renovation

Article Can you build an office inside your factory unit?

Article Do you need a permit for an office or shop renovation?

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Our service

Commercial Renovation for your home

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Still weighing your options?

Plan with the buying guide

Bring the choices, costs and questions together before deciding what to do next.

Read the commercial renovation buying guide →

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