RICS Sets AI Rules: Construction's Revolutionary March Deadline

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Insight from Project Flux's Yoshi Soornack & James Garner

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has launched a landmark global standard for responsible AI use, setting the framework for how construction professionals must approach artificial intelligence by March 2026.

The Unseen Risk in Your AI Toolkit

Artificial intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept in the built environment; it's a daily reality. From predictive analytics forecasting project delays to AI-assisted design shaping our cityscapes, the tools are powerful, promising, and quietly embedding themselves into every facet of our work. But with this rapid adoption comes a wave of unseen risks. Who is liable when an AI-generated design is flawed? How do we protect sensitive project data from increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks? And how do we ensure that the professional judgment honed over decades isn't eroded by a blind trust in algorithms?

The construction industry is at a critical juncture. While we embrace the potential of AI to enhance efficiency and drive innovation, the legal and ethical frameworks have struggled to keep pace. This has created a dangerous blind spot, leaving professionals and their clients exposed to a host of new liabilities. The lack of clear standards has meant that, until now, we've been navigating this new terrain without a map.

RICS Draws a Line in the Sand

In a landmark move, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has stepped in to fill this void. On 9 September 2025, it published the first-ever global professional standard for the responsible use of AI in surveying. This isn't just another report to be filed away; it's a mandatory standard that will come into effect on 9 March 2026, impacting over 130,000 RICS members and candidates across more than 140 countries. This is the first time a major built environment institution has embedded AI into its core standards, setting a precedent for the entire industry.

> "AI offers real promise to the surveying profession, but only if used responsibly and ethically. This standard ensures surveyors remain at the forefront of innovation while protecting clients, data and public trust." – Maureen Ehrenberg, RICS acting president elect

The new standard is comprehensive, covering everything from valuation and construction to infrastructure and land services. It's a clear signal that the days of ad-hoc AI adoption are over. The standard demands a new level of rigour, requiring professionals to implement clear policies on data use, maintain risk registers, and conduct detailed due diligence on any third-party AI systems. It's a move that balances innovation with a non-negotiable commitment to professional responsibility.

What This Means for Project Delivery Professionals

The RICS standard is more than just a set of rules; it's a framework for survival in the age of AI. For project delivery professionals, it provides a much-needed blueprint for navigating the legal and ethical minefield of AI implementation. The standard's emphasis on professional oversight is particularly crucial. It mandates that surveyors must not only assess the reliability of AI outputs but also be prepared to document their decisions in writing. This reinforces the irreplaceable value of human expertise, ensuring that AI remains a tool to augment, not replace, professional judgment.

Furthermore, the requirement for transparency with clients is a game-changer. Informing clients in writing about how and when AI will be used, and providing options for redress, will build trust and mitigate disputes. This proactive approach to communication is essential for managing client expectations and navigating the complexities of AI-driven projects.

> "The standard requires a basic understanding of different types of AI systems, the risk of erroneous AI output, inherent bias risks, and data usage and data risks."

This isn't just about compliance; it's about future-proofing your career. The standard's requirement for a basic understanding of AI systems and their associated risks means that upskilling is no longer optional. Professionals who invest in their AI literacy will be the ones who thrive in this new landscape. The RICS standard is a call to action for the entire industry to elevate its understanding of AI and to integrate it into our workflows in a way that is both innovative and responsible.

Your Urgent Next Steps

The March 2026 deadline may seem distant, but the time to prepare is now. The six-month preparation period is a critical window to review your current practices, upskill your teams, and implement the necessary governance frameworks. Don't wait for the deadline to loom; the proactive firms that embrace this standard will be the ones that build a competitive advantage.

Ready to get ahead of the curve? Subscribe to Project Flux for our deep-dive analysis of the RICS AI standard and our exclusive guide to implementing it in your practice. Don't just react to the future—lead it.

References

1. RICS launches landmark global standard on responsible AI use
2. RICS sets standard for surveyors' use of AI
3. AI and the law: The legal risks of using AI in construction
4. RICS launches landmark global standard on responsible use of AI in surveying

What Does This Mean for Me?

This isn't just guidance—it's the new rulebook. Project delivery professionals must now demonstrate AI competency, implement governance frameworks, and ensure ethical AI deployment. Non-compliance could mean exclusion from major projects.

Key Themes

- AI governance by March 2026
- Professional competency requirements
- Ethical AI deployment standards
- Global construction industry alignment

Down the Rabbit Hole

- Digital Construction Plus
- PBC Today