

## The Importance of Routine Maintenance

Property losses play a large role in the claims incurred by our ministries, parishes and schools. The good news is that many of these losses can be avoided by performing routine maintenance to buildings and grounds. The following article highlights items that should be included in your routine maintenance plan.

### Sump Pumps

Install emergency battery back-up units on sump pumps throughout the church where present, in an effort to avoid water damage as the result of an electrical outage during a storm. When possible, a second sump pump should be installed as well in the event the first pump fails. Test sump pumps on a regular basis. This can be done by filling the reservoir with water. Use enough water to trip the sump pump so that it turns on and pumps the water from the sump area.

### Flood Protection

Move valuable items out of storage areas in the lowest level of buildings. Floods in lower levels of buildings can not only occur from excessive rain water, but also from broken pipes, clogged drains, etc. Periodically check the basement/lower levels of all buildings to make sure that water is not present.

### Roof Inspection

Inspect flat roofs, gabled roofs and roofs that are pitched on a regular basis. In the fall, check the gutters and downspouts of all buildings in close proximity to trees to make sure that they are not clogged with leaves and branches.

After a rainstorm, inspect buildings with flat roofs for water that may pool on the roof. It is also very important to keep drains located on flat roofs clean, especially in the winter months when ice and snow may block them. If roof drains are blocked due to ice and snow or other debris, the possibility of flooding greatly increases when the snow and ice begin to melt. Damage to the roof and the internal building structure could result if the drains are not able to properly remove excess water.

In addition, be sure to keep a log of all completed roof inspections and/or maintenance. Include the contractor's name and phone number in the log.

### Contractors and Roofs

When contractors are installing a new roof or completing repairs to an existing roof, the contractor, on a regular basis, should police the area all around where the roof work is being done. This will ensure that various items such as metal, glass, or anything else that could cause a problem or hazard, is not left unattended. When work is completed on church buildings, contractors should be held accountable for cleaning up and policing the entire area where the work was done.

### Drains

Regular inspection and cleaning of exterior stairwell drains to basements should be conducted in an effort to lower the risk of flooding. In addition, where possible, downspout extensions should be long enough so that they drain water far away from the building. In addition, internal floor drains should be periodically rodded and *cameras used* as necessary. ***The system should be evaluated every 2-5 years.***

### Windows

A listing of each building's windows should be developed, which shows the age of the windows and any future replacement plan or



maintenance needs. If windows are being replaced or scraped for caulking or painting, be sure to test existing paint and subsequent scrapings for lead. Also, be sure to keep a log for all window inspections and maintenance. Include the contractor's name and phone number.

### Tuck-Pointing

A log should be maintained, which documents when buildings were tuck-pointed in the past and when consideration should be given to scheduling future work. The log should also show the name of the contractor, phone number and a copy of the contract and warranty.

### Contracts and Warranties

All contract and warranty information on significant purchases or projects completed in the church should be maintained in the church office files for future reference. Changes in personnel such as pastors, business managers, principals and buildings and grounds maintenance directors are quite common. New staff may not be aware of warranties and may take on the cost of a repair or replacement that would normally be covered by a warranty.

### Exterior Lighting

Exterior lighting should be inspected on a regular basis. Determine where additional light fixtures would be beneficial for security and theft deterrents. Many churches have had their gutters and downspouts stolen. Exterior lighting is the first and often most effective means of defense against theft and vandalism. If lights are not functioning due to broken or faulty bulbs, replace all light bulbs and inspect the sockets to ensure they are not cracked or in poor condition.

### Extension Cords

Extension cords should not be used as part of a permanent wiring arrangement and represent a potential fire hazard. It is recommended that extension cords, if present, be removed from service and all electrical appliances be plugged directly into an approved electrical outlet or approved outlet strip equipped with built-in surge protection to eliminate the potential hazard. In the past, many churches have experienced fires both large and small from the use/overuse of extension cords. Many of the buildings have electrical systems that

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are not able to handle the increased call for electricity that extension cords allow.

If extension cords are needed to adequately meet the building's electrical requirements, then the electrical systems should be inspected and updated by a certified electrical contractor so as to provide ample electrical service and electrical outlets for a building's electrical needs. ***Electrical cords are also a trip and fall hazard and should be routed out of all foot traffic routes.***

### Church Organ

To avoid the risk of electrical fire, the church organ should be inspected periodically to determine if there are any defects in the motor, cords or electrical outlets. If an organ is no longer used, it should be disconnected from the electrical system or the breaker should be permanently turned off.

### Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Install carbon monoxide detectors in the rectory and convent sleeping area hallways, where not already present, to alert of a carbon monoxide leak. In addition, detectors should also be installed in all boiler rooms. In the school and/or office areas, the detectors should be present on each floor where the building has any source of carbon monoxide such as a fireplace, boiler or water heater. ***The detector should be mounted high on the wall. It is recommended to use the Kiddy KN-COEG-3 detector.***

### Flammable Materials

Flammables should be correctly stored in NFPA metal cabinets. Unused and/or obsolete old paints and other flammables should be disposed of properly. Discourage the practice of storing paints and flammable chemicals for use at a later date. Purchase these products on an as-needed basis.

### Slips/Trips/Falls Outside

All sidewalks, handrails, steps and parking lots should be inspected on a regular basis. Keep a log of all completed sidewalk and parking lot inspections. Include the contractor's name and phone number in the log.

All noted hazards should be addressed to help ensure slips/trips/falls can be prevented. It is especially important to review the snow and ice removal plan for the winter. Off-hour activity times should also be addressed. ***Pot holes in the parking lots are especially important to identify and correct based on past claims experience.***

### Slips/Trips/Falls Inside

All interior hallways, aisles, classrooms, steps and offices should be monitored on a regular basis to help ensure there are no slip/trip/fall hazards and that proper housekeeping is maintained. All noted hazards should be addressed to help ensure that slips/trips/falls are prevented. Walk-off mats should be especially noted to ensure they are in good repair and they have enough coverage for the entrance areas. Wet floor signs should be used anytime there is the possibility of this hazard.

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