

Parish Property Management – Be prepared

Creating checklists for routine maintenance and updating them on an annual basis should be performed by the parish maintenance staff or the parish building and grounds committee to ensure systems and services are available for the comfort and safety of parishioners and parish staff

There are routine issues that parish facilities staff and volunteers should track as they prepare and execute the yearly planning for building stewardship and maintenance. This article offers some suggestions for reviewing parish facilities and potential follow-up actions.

Below are key areas for review:

A. Parking Lot and Exterior Lighting at Buildings

1. Ingress/egress issues at lot access that create “bottlenecks”
2. Surface/pavement condition - Is asphalt “alligatoring” (brittle and cracked) or potholes?
3. Striping - Are lines clearly visible, especially spaces designated for handicapped parking?
4. Is there a need to use striping to better direct the flow of car and pedestrian traffic (directional arrows and crosswalks) to provide clear safe paths for pedestrians or fire lanes as required by the local fire marshal?
5. Look for areas of ponding water...this could indicate clogged storm drains, a need for storm drains, or worse yet a source of flooding for parish buildings.
6. Are the parking lot lights all functions and providing light so people feel safe during evening use?
7. Are wallpacks and floodlights working? Is there a need for any additional building lighting?
8. Are timers and photocells working properly as to come on at dark and go off when the sun comes up?

B. Sidewalks/Stairs/Landings: Check condition and note any trip hazards.

C. Exterior Stair Handrails: Check condition and note any issues (ex: are they securely anchored, are they rusted, etc); the Department of Labor has regulations that parishes can be cited when these assemblies are deteriorated.

D. Septic Systems: Is there a septic system or holding tank that needs to be maintained on an annual basis?

E. Landscaping: Much emphasis and attention is usually put towards cosmetic improvements; however be sure to pay attention to liability issues...overgrown shrubs and trees make it easy for a kid to pop out of nowhere and in front of a car. Also trees and shrubs planted near building may look pretty but can cause all sorts of expense (clogged gutters and damaged underground water lines to name a few).

F. Gutters and Downspouts -Are they free of debris? Are downspouts directed away from the building? Keeping them where the water is released close to the building can create very expensive foundation problems down the road; debris can also create ice dams in the winter, which may cause leaks in adjacent roof areas. Keep gutters clear, especially in the fall, and make an effort to check and clean all gutters and leaders after all the leaves have fallen from the trees.

G. Ceilings -Stained ceiling (tiles) could be an indicator of either a roof leak, an HVAC problem, or a plumbing leak. If the water mark gets bigger or is wet after a hard rain, probably indicative of a roof leak. If it is not raining however wet and it is during a season where the AC is being used this could mean a frozen condenser or a condenser drain pan that is clogged and overflowing. If it is a steady leak this could mean a plumbing leak from a water pipe or a sprinkler head.

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- H. Supplemental Heater Maintenance at Vestibules:** Many churches constructed or renovated in the last 10 years have vestibules where electrical heating units were installed to create a thermal barrier between the outside air and the conditioned air in the church. The units can collect dust because they draw in air, heat the air, and discharge it. Dust can infiltrate the unit on the intake of air. The heating elements can ignite the dust. To prevent a fire, these units should be inspected and cleaned twice a year. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning procedures; normally, these are included in the project Operations and Maintenance manual that is transmitted at the end of construction or renovation projects. If you have an HVAC service contract, consider incorporating these units into the annually cycle of equipment inspections.
- I. Life Safety and Fire Suppression/Protection:**
- 1. Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** AMANDA'S LAW requires all residences, whether they are single or two family homes, multi-family apartment buildings, or institutional buildings such as college dormitories, nursing homes, etc., to be equipped with Carbon Monoxide Alarms if the building contains or is attached to any carbon monoxide emitting source (like boilers and hot water heaters). This law makes Carbon Monoxide Alarms mandatory for all residences, regardless of when they were constructed. If the alarms are battery powered, these units should be checked annually, along with smoke detector units.
 - 2. Fire Extinguisher Inspections and Replacement :** NFPA10, Standard for Portable Extinguishers is adapted by many jurisdictions to ensure places of public assembly have fully-functional extinguishers ready to respond to small emergencies. According to the standard, a 6-year maintenance review is required for all fire extinguishers purchased after 2013.
 - 3. Fire sprinkler tests** – In buildings with automatic fire sprinklers, are annual fire sprinkler tests being performed if there are fire sprinklers?
- J. Changing Air Filters in Residential and Institutional Air Conditioning Systems:** Air filters should be checked every 2 months. Filters should be replaced at least twice a year - in June, after springtime pollen levels have abated, and in November, when falling leaves may create airborne particulates that can affect filter performance.

Consulting with your diocesan building office to obtain technical assistance is advisable should you have more extensive questions or conditions at your parish facilities. When possible, develop a preventative maintenance action plan; a sample of a checklist is enclosed for your use.

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Sample Preventive Maintenance Schedule

<u>MAINTENANCE/INSPECTION</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
Review building codes and safety regulations	Annually
Fire code inspection	Annually
Fire alarm system	NFPA 72 recommended testing intervals or AHJ (Authorities Having Jurisdiction) recommendations
Fire extinguishers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect monthly • Maintain annually
Kitchen ranges, ovens and vent hoods	Semi-annually (NFPA 17A recommendations)
HVAC system inspection and change filters	Quarterly
Boiler	Annually or bi-annually, depending on the type of system
Water heaters — inspect, drain and de-scale	Annually
Inspect pipes	Annually, before winter months
Protect exposed pipes with insulation sleeves or wrapping	Before winter months
Storm drains and septic systems	Semi-annually
Exterior condition of building; Inspect roof, flashings, caulking, sealants weather stripping, thresholds, hinges, door closers and locks for leaks or cracks	Semi-annually
Rain gutters	Quarterly
Inspect wiring	Every two years for new installations Annually for installations more than five years old
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