

Church Facility Maintenance

The goal of every facility maintenance program is to preserve and maintain the resources of a building for its use and operation. For congregations, this goal should be expanded to include the stewardship of resources for ministry and their communities.

For most congregations, the purpose of facility maintenance includes the following objectives:

- 1. Preserve the value of the facility for the congregation and community**
- 2. Operate the facility safely and efficiently**
- 3. Prevent system failures that can interrupt the operations of a church and its ministry**
- 4. Protect the larger assets of the congregation**

To achieve these objectives, churches should consider adopting the following best practices for maintaining their facilities:

1. Create and maintain an inventory of building components and the condition of the facility's equipment. In order to evaluate the various components and systems of a building, church leaders should conduct an annual inspection of the facility. This inspection should

be performed by a professional auditor, architect or building inspector, who can help church leaders identify potential problems and design an effective maintenance plan.

Major items on this list should include building systems like the roof, fire prevention, heating and cooling, drainage, insulation, building envelope (exterior walls, doors, windows), and the structure of the facility. Additional items may include flooring, sound equipment, lighting, office equipment, bathroom fixtures, furniture, interior walls, ceilings and kitchen equipment.

2. Create a method for identifying and ranking maintenance projects and activities. After the facility inspection, it is important to create a plan for how to address maintenance problems and needs. Most professional facility managers do this by using a lifecycle and cost analysis system, based on industry norms and depreciation.

For example, the average lifecycle for a standard forced air furnace is 15 years. Taking into consideration the age, condition and cost of equipment replacement, a facility manager can determine the break-even amount for repairing or replacing the equipment. A lifecycle analysis also can help congregational leaders estimate the amount of financial reserves needed to adequately maintain the facility. For more information on lifecycle analysis, please visit <http://www.oldhouseweb.com/how-to-advice/life-expectancy.shtml>.

3. Create an annual maintenance plan based on the service and operating needs of the facility and its equipment. Initially, leaders should create a checklist of maintenance activities that need to occur regularly (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.), and develop a maintenance plan based on this timeline. In addition, leaders should plan and schedule additional preventative maintenance and repair as they correspond to the checklist. For example, if the roof of the facility needs to be replaced, it may be a good idea to schedule the cleaning of the ventilation ducts for the HV/AC system while the attic is open and accessible. Finally, leaders should create an operations manual to help explain maintenance procedures and activities on the checklist.



4. Develop financial plan for system and equipment upgrades based on short-term and long-term objectives. As noted above, facility maintenance plans can help congregations evaluate and financially prepare for the repair and replacement of equipment. It is important that these maintenance plans exist in the context of the larger financial and ministry goals of the congregation.

These goals, along with financial budgeting, will help determine the priority of projects. Some best practices are to 1) develop a 10-year capital improvement plan; 2) create a reserve account for emergencies and repairs; 3) create an annual maintenance plan; and 4) link the annual maintenance plan to the annual budget, seasonal tasks/calendar and cash flow for the organization.

5. Communicate maintenance needs and plans with staff and congregational leadership. While communication is not a direct action related to maintaining a facility, it is

important to let your congregation know how resources are being used. Unlike most large commercial buildings, congregations usually do not have a professional facility manager and instead rely upon volunteer leaders, which sometimes results in deferred maintenance and facilities that do not operate at optimum efficiency. By taking the above steps and communicating maintenance needs more broadly, congregations are more likely to care for their facilities.

By taking these steps, including inspecting and adjusting building inventory annually, leaders should be able to operate and maintain their facility with higher efficiency, better maintenance, and lower operating and repair costs, resulting in more and better resources for ministry.

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