



## Seasonal Maintenance—Why It Is Done

When one purchases an automobile the owner expects to pay for routine maintenance that can be “money well spent” because this maintenance is a means to protect the investment made when first buying the car. It is an example of asset management because the owner is managing the care needed to assure a useful service life for the car. For property managers and building managers it can be said the same “managing the care needed to assure a useful service life” applies to buildings and the building infrastructure.

Last month in our *Focus on Facilities* we discussed what a planned maintenance work order was and soliciting service contracts for maintenance of major pieces of equipment e.g., boiler, chiller, etc. and both these topics are associated with asset management. There may be daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual tasks that need to be completed pertaining to maintenance. To keep a building comfortable with a healthy environment for its occupants there are several seasonal maintenance tasks on the agenda starting outside the building. There are other seasonal requirements to keep the outside of these structure appealing and safe.

A time sensitive period is the ringing in of the New Year. It is always a good idea at that time to go around and check smoke and carbon monoxide detector alarms. Often space thermostats operate with a battery and it is good practice to replace thermostat batteries each year at the start of the year. Fire extinguishers should be checked the first of each year when checking fire and smoke alarms to assure there is adequate pressure inside each extinguisher.

The building’s city water backflow preventer(s), addressed this month in our *Focus on Facilities*, are required to be tested annually to make sure it works in the event that city water pressure is lost in the street resulting water, and more specifically chemically treated water within the building is not drawn back into the city water system outside the building.



The start of spring and the start of winter dryer vents should be inspected to make sure the discharge outlet is not clogged from lint exhausted out of the clothes dryer. Cleaning the dryer vent exhaust duct should be cleaned at once a year to assure safe dryer performance.

The parking lot may have experienced damage from winter snowplows, potholes, and curbing damaged. The building manager knows that money must be spent if this parking lot is to be sustainable and safe in the years to come. Lawns often get turned up from these same snowplowing, snow blowers, and shoveling, as well as the edge of the lawn by the parking lot, and sidewalk may have a winter coating of sand that was put down to protect the pedestrians walking to and from the building. This dirt needs to be cleaned up and probably new grass will need to be seeded along the sidewalk from the damage of winter sanding. In the spring driveways, walkways, and steps should be inspected for cracks as this damage will only become progressively worse requiring major patch/repair if corrective action is not taken. In addition, cracks in the surface can result in someone tripping as they walk along the sidewalk, up the

steps, or across the parking lot.

The shrubs and trees around the building may have experienced some “winter kill” a definition that states a plant or part of a plant dies from being exposed to winter conditions such as excessively cold and prolonged outdoor temperatures, wind that can dry out parts of bushes and trees, and some types of roots that freeze below grade. Building managers will do an inspection of all of these issues outdoors in the spring to work on rejuvenating the landscape.

Inside the maintenance manager may contract the seasonal startup services of a heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) licensed contractor to prepare the air-conditioning equipment for startup while preparing the boiler and associated equipment for shutdown at the end of the heating season. When scheduling seasonal work quite often a building manager considers October 1<sup>st</sup> the start of the heating season and May 1<sup>st</sup> the start of the air-conditioning season. Shutting down the heating system may coincide with air-conditioning startup of maybe it is performed a couple of weeks after the air-conditioning seasonal shutdown. Often in-house maintenance personnel may not have the training to do this seasonal maintenance and a specifically trained service mechanic will be contracted to do this type of work.

When primary heating and air-conditioning equipment are started up, based on the season it is important to know that the technician will be performing an efficiency test on the boiler and also an efficiency test on the refrigeration system.

Those facilities that have play equipment outdoors should be checked each spring or early summer for damage and make repairs where required. After flowering bushes have blossomed the building manager will trim these plants to remove damaged branches, to retain the shape of the bush, and to even cut the bush back because it is getting to large for the location e.g., blocking a window that could become a security concern.

The building manager will probably wait until the fall to consider resealing wooden decks and examining siding on a wooden exterior of a facility. The fall and its drier climate is a good time to consider touch up painting outside or applying a new coat of paint over the entire

wood exterior. Seasonal pressure washing of buildings with vinyl siding should be considered in mid-summer or the fall if the exterior is showing signs of mildew on it.

Around the same time that the heating season has started the building manager should have a maintenance person climb up a ladder to inspect the rain gutters and make sure the gutters and the downspouts are clear of leaves so that rain can drain properly from the roof. With temperatures in the winter varying ice can form in the gutters and possibly begin to back up the roof and more specifically back up under the shingles resulting in water damage inside with the potential for mold to occur on ceilings and walls within the building. For flat roofs the maintenance should clear around all roof drains removing leaves, branches, etc. that could result in the water collecting on the roof and not drain as designed. In the spring the roof and rain gutters should be checked for any winter damage.

With winter coming on, all underground sprinkler and water piping systems need to be taken care of by someone experienced with blowing the water out of the piping outdoor distribution. Other water lines that are intended to remain active will need some method against freezing while outdoor faucets will need to be drained back into the heated building or also receive some method of freeze protection.

For more seasonal maintenance recommendations or a list of pre-qualified service providers please reach out to the Diocese of Cleveland Facilities Services team.

For more information:  
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