



## *Fall Cleanup in Your Equipment Room*

This month with Fall now upon us and winter coming soon it is a good time to complete a visual inspection of your equipment rooms as buildings tend to become more closed up to keep the cold weather outside.

While equipment rooms are often out of sight and out of mind, these rooms need the same attention to keep them safe and clean as the rest of your facility. There are varieties of equipment rooms that may exist in your facility, in the form of a garage, tool shed, broom closet, boiler room, electrical room or washroom. These places should be clean, safe, and ready for the winter.

First and foremost is to complete a visual inspection inside the equipment room(s) and outdoors adjacent to the associated equipment room. Many of these types of rooms have ventilation systems to relieve temperature rise due to heat given off by the equipment within the room. Some equipment has relief fan/vent(s) such as gas pressure relief valve(s) piped to the outdoors. And, then there is equipment that needs air to be drawn into the equipment room to the associated burner for proper combustion. Each should have a routine inspection to make sure the temperature controlled relief fan outdoor exhaust vent is not blocked from venting outdoors, including the potential for snow build up come the winter. The same with piped vents to outdoors and air intake louvers into the equipment room. All of these restrictions can create a hazardous situation.

That said, first impressions walking into an equipment room can be telling. With “safety first” attitude the next thought for someone planning to do a Fall cleanup of an equipment room will be to make sure the floor is not wet. Aside from the safety issue of one slipping, the source of the problem should be checked and resolved. A damp room can lead to mildew occurring as well as create a musty room smell.



Fall cleanup should also include light fixtures within an equipment room making sure the lenses are dusted and all the light bulbs are working. It is also good to make sure there is adequate lighting throughout the room, even going to the effort to install an additional light fixture to improve the lighting within the room if needed. Another suggestion is to have a service lamp with an extension cord hanging on the wall as one enters the room.

Also one should check for a fire extinguisher mounted right next to that service lamp inside each equipment room. Each equipment room should have the proper fire extinguisher with the correct system pressure indicated on its gauge.

A visual inspection should also include making sure the exit ways out of the equipment room are not blocked by a stack of boxes, supplies, etc. as these rooms sometimes become unplanned storage rooms.

Depending on the type of equipment within the room, there may be an OSHA personal protection equipment (PPE) requirement when someone is in the room or working on equipment within the room. In addition to PPE requirements, the specific equipment room may have other code required safety alarm/detectors e.g., refrigerant monitoring in addition to heat detector, smoke detector, and/or carbon monoxide detector.

Another personal protection device to look for when cleaning up the equipment room with one's walk through is to invest in portable eye wash stations. These are handy to have at home mounted next to one's fire extinguisher too as a safety feature to quickly flush one's eyes should something spray up into the eyes.

Continuing on with the Fall walk-through review of specific equipment should include the following:

#### **Fan Rooms:**

- Inspect sheet metal for duct leaks by listening for the sound of an air leak or by visual inspection to see if the duct sealant at sheet metal joints is cracked or the duct tape is not adhering to the metal.
- Are damper linkage still connected or has the damper rod fastener come loose resulting in the damper blades failing open or closed?
- Does each fan have a belt guard for personal safety or is the fan missing this metal protector?
- Is the fan belt broken and the fan motor continuing to operate without rotating the fan wheel?

#### **Chiller Room:**

- Inspect pipe and pipe insulation for leaks resulting from condensation dripping on the floor or on other pipes/equipment.
- Are the floor drains covers blocked from debris and/or has a box or some other obstruction been placed over the drain?
- Is the refrigerant monitoring system operating as intended?
- Has the refrigeration equipment been shutdown for the heating season?

#### **Rooms With Boiler & Domestic Hot Water Heater:**

- Does the room have an air intake and exhaust grill or a mechanical ventilation system to service the boiler/burner installation?
- Are all the hot water or steam pipes insulated or has some of the insulation fallen off requiring reinstalling of the insulation to prevent someone from being burn and/or the room overheating.
- Does the city water make-up backflow preventer tag show that the device has received its annual test?
- Are there water leaks around the heating equipment indicating a failing heat exchanger?

**Electrical Closets & Utility Rooms:** One of the more popular rooms to store boxes and other things because these rooms have no equipment with moving parts, are these two types of rooms. In addition:

- Don't allow containers labeled flammable and/or combustible liquids to be storage in these rooms as they should be stored per the container's safety directions.
- Where a utility room has a sink make sure the water pipes and fixtures are not leaking.

With the Fall visual inspection of your equipment rooms complete it's time to sit by the fire place and settle in for the winter...Oh yes, maybe one last check; Is the fireplace chimney, as well as, the boiler chimney clear or do you need a chimney sweep?

For more information:  
[facilities@dioceseofcleveland.org](mailto:facilities@dioceseofcleveland.org)

