



Is it Time for Your Building Checkup?

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As we age, our bodies start to wear out. As we get older, it is a good idea to get a regular medical checkup. The same is true for church buildings. What you do not know about your building could be costly. A building checkup, or facility condition assessment, requires expert help. Here is a checklist for a church building checkup:

- 1. DOCUMENTS:** Do you have all building records? Do you have copies of the plans for each expansion and renovation? Are all plans, property surveys, deeds and legal descriptions stored safely, so you can get them when you need them? Scan your important documents to a secure cloud storage platform, and store the originals in a safety deposit box or fireproof safe. Valuable records are called “valuable” for good reason.
- 2. HISTORY:** It is important to know when each building phase was constructed and when the most recent improvements were completed so you will have some idea of when to schedule upcoming maintenance.
- 3. ROOFING:** Roofing wears out. What is the age and life expectancy of the roofing? Do you have adequate funds set aside for roofing replacement? Should you consider replacement roofing with a longer life expectancy?

4. HVAC: How well is the air conditioning and heating system working? What is the age of each major component and when were they last serviced or replaced? Do you have funds in reserve to replace HVAC equipment as it wears out? Have you considered an annual maintenance contract? Does the age of your HVAC system indicate it may be inefficient? Is it possible that the cost of more efficient equipment could be recovered in a reasonable time if new high-efficiency equipment were installed when existing equipment wears out?

5. ELECTRICAL: What is the condition of the electrical system? Does it meet code and is it safe? Do you have old inefficient lighting that could be replaced with much higher efficiency lighting? One efficiency upgrade being implemented by churches includes retrofitting major building areas with motion-sensor light switches so lights are on only in rooms that are occupied. Could the operational savings pay for these upgrades? What is the long-term return on the investment?

6. ENERGY AUDIT: Answers to these HVAC and lighting efficiency questions can be provided by an energy audit. Having your facility thoroughly inspected by a qualified energy auditor may reveal many potential long-term cost efficiencies. How do current utility costs compare to similar church facilities in your area?

7. FINISHES: What is the condition of major finishes, such as carpeting, tile and other flooring materials? What about surfaces that must be regularly painted? When will these finishes need to be replaced?

8. RESTROOMS: Are all restrooms clean, and are they easy to keep clean and maintain?

9. WINDOWS & DOORS: Are windows and doors in good condition? Do older windows have inefficient single-pane glass? Insulated double-pane glass was first widely used in the 1970s. After 20 or 30 years, the seal breaks down and an ugly film develops on the inside glass surfaces. This means the glass is no longer insulating, and it is time to reglaze or replace windows.

10. AUDIO: Is your worship center sound system functioning properly? Can your people hear, without distortions and

echoes?

11. HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES: Does your building have any dangerous substances present which could harm building users? What about asbestos? Lead? Mold? A testing lab can check for the presence of these toxic materials.

12. CODES: Are there any building code or life-safety problems that could indicate potential hazards to building users? Are smoke detectors, fire alarms, fire extinguishers and other life-safety equipment fully functional? Have they been tested by qualified inspectors? If you have a sprinkler system, are you certain it will function properly in case of a fire?

13. SAFETY PLAN: Is there a building safety plan in place? Are there contingency plans for major events such as tornados, earthquakes, fire or floods?

14. STRUCTURE: Is the building in good structural condition?

15. SECURITY: Is the building resistant to intruders? Are preschool and children’s areas safe and secure? What about the church office area? Consider having a security expert inspect your facilities and recommend ways to make them safer and more secure.

16. HVAC SECURITY: Is equipment secure from theft and vandalism? Churches are easy targets for copper thieves. Is unsecured HVAC equipment covered by your insurance?

17. OBSOLESCENCE: Are any of your buildings reaching their normal life expectancy? Is it time to start thinking about replacing worn-out portions of your facility that just do not warrant the cost of continued maintenance? Does the condition of your facilities make a poor impression on visitors?

18. SITE: What about the condition of the parking lots, drives, paving and landscaping? Does the asphalt paving need to be sealed? Is site lighting fully functional?

19. SIGN: Is the main building sign attractive? Is there good directional signage on the site and building interior? You know your way around. Are visitors able to find their way?

20. INSURANCE: If a disaster strikes tomorrow, will property insurance coverage be adequate to replace what is lost? Does it include flood insurance?