



## Monthly Q&A - Maintaining Your Property Like a Professional

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**Q:** Our law firm just purchased a small professional office building, but we are not large enough to employ a property manager. What is the best way to maintain the property?

**A:** You do not have to have a full-time property manager to maintain your property, but you, or whoever will be responsible for day-to-day maintenance, should think like one. Since you will not have an in-house maintenance staff, you will be depending on outsourced work. Your maintenance manager must have sufficient knowledge of maintenance operations to effectively oversee contracted work and make sure it is done in a competent and timely manner.

The first step is a maintenance policy and procedures manual. This will ultimately be a collection of everything that could or should be done to maintain the property. You can start with any documents that you may have inherited when you purchased the building. You probably had an engineering inspection before closing, and you may have had subcontractor inspections as well. These reports and recommendations can be the start of ongoing checklists.

Each of the major systems of your building should have their own calendared checklist. They include:

1. Roof and structure
2. Heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC)
3. Plumbing - including storm water drainage and sanitary systems
4. Electrical
5. Fire Safety - including fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, and fire alarms
6. Security
7. Paving
8. Landscaping

Your building may have other requirements as well, such as elevator maintenance and inspection. The most important goal is to fully understand the systems of your building and develop a plan for handling the short term and long term maintenance requirements. Do not hesitate to ask your contractors for their recommendations on maintenance. However, use that information to develop your own checklist. And make sure that all your contractors are licensed, insured and qualified.

My other two major recommendations are to make safety an absolute priority, and concentrate on fixing problems right the first time. You will actually lower your maintenance costs over the long term by establishing and maintaining optimal conditions from the first day. As an example, a major cause of expensive HVAC repairs is not replacing filters on a regular basis. I also suggest that you know, and prominently post, the location of all water and gas shut off valves, as well as the main electrical circuit breakers. Plans for the building should also be accessible.

These are the basic steps a professional property manager would take to manage the risk and lower

the long-term operating costs of an office building. If you would rather concentrate your energies elsewhere, professional property management and maintenance firms can do all of this for you. At Hunt Construction Services, Inc., our maintenance department acts as out-sourced property manager for our clients in exactly this manner.

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