



## **Time for a property condition assessment: Conduct a “checkup” every 3-5 years - by Jessica Vail**

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As buildings age they become more inefficient, which can mean unnecessary, out of pocket expenditures every month; whether it is paying higher utility bills or constantly paying to repair outdated and failing equipment such as boilers and chillers. Having a property condition assessment performed by a professional engineer or registered architect is especially important for aging facilities. It is imperative to the overall health and future of your building and bottom line to conduct a “checkup” every 3-5 years. This assessment will help identify and prioritize required maintenance, repairs and upgrades to select building systems and prepare an estimated budget. This will allow property managers and building owners to move forward in developing an appropriate work program that maintains and protects the value and integrity of the property. This can translate into various repairs and savings on monthly utility bills.

### Site & Grounds

It is good not only good practice to keep your facility aesthetically pleasing but maintaining the integrity of your outdoor components could mean a safer, more efficient site. These items may include parking lots, garages, sidewalks, landscaping, exterior lighting and signage.

### Structural Integrity

It is vital to have the foundation, wall framing, decks, balconies and columns regularly checked. This can help to identify early signs of building settlement or leaks. If these items go undetected it could lead to very costly repairs and compromise the integrity of the building.

### Building Envelope

The building envelope includes: the roof, windows, façade and exterior doors. The engineer will inspect the roof and façade systems to make sure there is no damage, cracks or leaks. It is beneficial to address and repair potential problem areas before they become leaks and cause water damage.

## Energy Audits

Is your building energy efficient and utilizing eco-friendly practices and materials? A professional can perform an ASHRAE Energy Audit. Building owners elect to have an energy audit performed typically when they want to reduce energy consumption and costs, replace equipment or systems whose costs may be deferred by energy incentive programs, reduce the building's carbon footprint and find savings that can be directed to other capital improvement projects. The energy audit typically focuses on the building's envelope design heating, cooling, ventilation systems, lighting and equipment operations. There are four types of energy audits: Preliminary (Benchmarking), Level 1 (walk through survey), Level 2 (Energy Survey and Analysis) and Level 3 (Investment Grade Energy Audit).

## Air Quality

Has your building ever experienced "smell issues" or are some areas of the building always hot or always cold? This could be an air quality or building pressurization issues. Having an efficient and properly functioning HVAC system is not only good practice but it ensures a healthy, well-ventilated working environment for tenants and employees; which studies show, have a direct relationship on worker productivity and tenant happiness.

## Efficient Lighting & Plumbing Products

Lighting and plumbing fixtures have the most direct contact with the end user. Often times, these items also increase building operational costs as they age. Reviewing occupant trends and incorporating new technologies may reduce overall energy demand. High efficiency lighting and plumbing products are becoming the standard in the building and construction industry and the incorporation of these items will help keep operating costs to a minimum. An assessment will provide invaluable information that will assist you in evaluating cost-benefit of repairs, lifespan of the common elements and return on investment for the future. It is also good practice to make sure the building is structurally sound and functioning properly to meet the ever-changing building codes and maintain a safe place to work and live.

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