

What Does Preventive Maintenance Have to Do with the Mission And Goals of Your Organization?

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If you are anything like me, then you might drive an eight-year-old Chevy with over 120,000 miles on it and want to drive it for another 120,000 miles. Why? Because it is economically prudent, and other than a few scratches and door dings, it is in excellent condition. Now, I realize I have had to do my part to make sure it remains in excellent condition: I regularly change the oil, replace worn tires and perform the dealer recommended service at certain mileage markers. We all know this is preventive or proactive maintenance and is a necessary part of owning a car. Have you ever considered that your building envelope and roof should be maintained in the same manner with a proactive approach and that doing so actually helps to support your organization's mission and goals? What are you doing to get the most life out of the physical, structural assets that support the mission?

Since I am a roofer, let's consider how one of your building's greatest and most costly assets tends to go unnoticed because of its location – the roof. Yes, it is out of sight, so it sometimes is not top of mind. Tenants and employees do not come to your location because you have a great roof, but they will most certainly be turned off if water drips on their head or hardware, or they are having an allergic reaction to the possible mold growth due to ongoing leaks. What if these issues could be prevented so that the mission of the organization could keep marching forward without a hitch? They can – with a little bit of proactive maintenance.

It is no fun having to ask an asset manager for extra emergency funds to repair building equipment especially when the emergency could have been prevented, or at least minimized with proactive care. It can be a strain on you AND your team members. Here are some things you can start doing today to begin proactively managing your roof as the asset it is while also extending its life:

- Collect all roofing information – create a file to hold all historical information on your roof and building envelope components. Documents such as warranties, previous repair invoices, roof drawings, rooftop equipment inventory, photos, etc., are all imperative.
- Minimize traffic on your roof. Most damage on the roof is man-made. Keep a log of all contractors who go up on your roof in case any damage is caused while they are working. Be sure to inspect their work area for damages **before** they leave the premises.
- Pick up and dispose of rooftop debris. You will be amazed by what you will find on your roof. I have seen everything from bolts and screws to children's toys and abandoned equipment.
- Clean or unclog roof drains and gutters. This allows water to flow freely to drains and minimizes ponding. Ponding for more than 48 hours can void the roofing manufacturer's warranty and rapidly deteriorate your roof system. Plus, large amounts of ponding water add excess weight on the roof that exceeds the structural design. This, of course, could have a very dangerous outcome.
- Trim and remove tree limbs that overhang the roof. They can scrape or penetrate the roof and clog the drains and gutters with debris.

- Keep rooftop equipment in good repair. Make sure doors on HVAC units are properly secured and that grease traps are not spilling on to the roof. Loose equipment can become projectiles during high wind events.

If your roof system is currently covered under a roofing manufacturer's warranty, most roofing manufacturers require proof of maintenance, repair and visual inspections by a certified contractor. That being the case, if you decide to utilize the expertise of a roofing contractor to perform regular proactive maintenance, you should request the following services:

- Semi-annual roof surveys to inspect every penetration, flashing transition, warrantable conditions and non-warrantable ones.
- A written report of the roof system condition with an inventory of rooftop equipment, deficiencies and approximate remaining life.
- Digital photos of existing conditions, equipment and deficiencies divided into emergency and remedial issues to help set priorities.
- Costs for repairs required on all emergency and remedial deficiencies. You can also request a budget for roof replacement if you are reaching the end of your roof's serviceable life.

What is the value of a proactive roof maintenance program:

- Early detection minimizes leaks and repair costs. An open lap or seam in a roof system, if caught early could cost as little as \$500 to repair. If the lap is left open for six months and is subjected to torrential rains, it could easily grow to 10 times that cost or more.
- Proactive maintenance extends the service life of roof. The National Roofing Contractors Association performed a scientific study that determined a roofing system could last up to 30% longer than its warrantable period with proactive surveys and maintenance. So, if a roof has a 20-year warranty, it could last an additional six years or more with proper care and maintenance! Roofs fail prematurely out of neglect.
- Proactive maintenance protects your significant capital investment. From a financial standpoint, the roof is one of the most expensive capital investments that is made by an organization. If you invest 50 cents per square foot in proactive roof maintenance, that is much easier to manage and budget for than a full replacement that could be \$12 to \$16 a square foot depending on the type of roof system, location and number of penetrations.
- Proactive maintenance meets roof warranty requirements set forth by the manufacturer.

Ultimately, we are expected to be good stewards of our assets, and clearly the building(s) in which you work are an asset. So, just as you tend to the beautification and cleanliness of your property, also tend to your building exterior and roof because it physically supports your organization's mission each day.

Since I started writing this article, my dependable Chevy hit 121,000 miles. It will soon be time to change the oil again. When will it be time to survey your roof system and begin proactively maintaining it?