



Taft West, Director of Property Management Training

Get ready, here comes winter

Days are getting shorter, leaves are falling, temperatures are dropping. It is time to make sure your building is ready for winter. Thorough inspections on a regular basis will save you money in the long run. Hire professional contractors to perform the maintenance and repairs that are beyond your expertise. Here is a partial list of what to check:

BUILDING INSPECTION

EXTERIOR - *Inspection should begin at the roof, work to the bottom of the building, and include the grounds.*

ROOF Check for cracks, blisters, holes and loose shingles. Make sure flashing is sealed.

GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS All items must be securely fastened. Clean out leaves and debris; otherwise water will run over the top and eventually find its way inside the building. If it reaches the interior drywall, the moisture creates mold.

LIGHTING Porch and all perimeter lighting must be functional for security and safety. Make sure lighting back-up system is working in the event of a power failure.

BRICK WALLS Check for loose mortar in joints and cracked bricks. A white powder ("effervescence") on brick means moisture is getting inside joints and spot tuckpointing is needed. Use mortar, not caulk.

STAIRS Should not sag or have loose boards. Handrails should be bolted and firmly in place.

DOORS All doors should close snugly and lock properly. Exterior doors should have weather-stripping to keep out cold air.

GROUNDS Sidewalks should have no cracks or tripping hazards. Shrubs, grass and trees should be neatly trimmed.

DRIVEWAYS Check for cracks, buckling, oil spots or transmission fluid spills.

FENCES Should be strong, erect and undamaged. Gates should lock properly, and hinges should be aligned and oiled.

PLAYGROUND Make sure equipment meets legal requirements, and swings are secure and adequately spaced. Wood chips should be thick enough to cushion a fall. Check for any damage that may cause injury.

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INTERIOR - *Inspection should begin at the lowest level/basement and ascend to the top areas. A series of inspections should be done which concentrate specifically on plumbing, electrical and heating systems.*

BASEMENT FOUNDATION Check for cracks, moisture and holes that bugs and mice could use to gain entry.

STAIRS Steps should be firm and supportive without missing stair treads.

CARPETING Should be cleaned, as needed, and should not be worn or torn.

FLOORS HARDWOOD floors should not sag or squeak. To fix squeaks, nail floor to subfloor or place a shim between joist and subfloor. **TILE** floors should be clean and shiny. **CERAMIC** floors should be free of cracks or chipping.

LOCKS/DOORS Locks should work freely and doors should not stick.

LIGHT FIXTURES Make sure fixtures are hung properly and secured to the ceiling.

CEILINGS There should be no large cracks or wet spots. Small cracks should be plastered. Ceiling joists should be straight and not sagging.

ELECTRICAL RECEPTACLES Make sure the faceplate covers receptacles. Check to be sure all wires are connected securely.

CIRCUIT BREAKERS Be sure they are tightly locked and all locations have identification stickers. *When work is in progress*, hang a highly visible sign on electrical box and turn off power until work is completed.

PLUMBING Inspect the system and all valves, faucets, drains and P-traps for leaks or loose connections.

HOT WATER HEATER Keep the tank clean and dry. Check for leaks. The tank should be drained every year.

TOILETS Should be seated and flush properly. Check for leaks at the handle or base, and at water supply lines.

BOILER Check for leaks. During the heating season, check the water gauge level, the thermostat and relief valve daily.

RADIATORS Check valves for leaks and proper on/off when turned. System may need to get bled annually. Air vents should be checked for proper wall attachment and should be free of dust, soot or rust.

FURNACES If there is a **CENTRAL** furnace, have it checked by a professional HVAC firm prior to the start of the season. For **INDIVIDUAL** furnaces, check motors and belts; and change filters monthly or per manufacturer's recommendations.

THERMOSTATS Remove face cover and check calibration. Manually turn toward "heat" and the furnace should deliver heat to the unit.