

# Repairs & Maintenance

Keith Moore

## A TALE OF TWO MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

### EXPLORING DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO RESTAURANT MAINTENANCE

Building maintenance is a broad, somewhat subjective topic. At its most basic level, maintenance is providing support or upkeep to a building, machinery or other asset in an effort to keep it in good repair—for example, a janitor keeping a school clean.

However, we all know that there is a lot more to maintenance than this straight forward definition—particularly in the world of restaurants. So, I thought I would ask two RFMA facility professionals about their view of the subject.

### TWO APPROACHES TO MAINTENANCE

Facility manager No. 1 adheres to the following standard maintenance:

- Paint exteriors once every five to eight years.
- Fill cracks and do stucco, mortar and masonry work as needed or during an annual audit.
- Check all pest intrusion points during annual audit, or if there is an issue.
- Check and repair rotted window sills annually.
- Check for water intrusion points annually, or when issues arise.
- Clean windows and touch up paint as needed.

Facility manager No. 2, on the other hand, sticks to the following list:

- Clean HVAC coils semiannually.
- Change HVAC filters bimonthly.
- Do an HVAC tune-up in the fall and spring.
- Clean gutters once a year.
- Drain water heater annually.
- Fully flush all drains and drain lines annually.
- Upgrade landscaping about twice a year, in the fall and spring.
- Repair parking lot holes annually, and re-seal and re-stripe every three years.

- Perform exterior lighting maintenance as needed.
- Repair woodwork every three years.
- Replace carpet every three years
- Pressure wash free standing restaurants every year.
- Repair/replace tile work as needed.

## CREATING A MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

If we accept the original definition of maintenance and reference these two examples, we can put together an effective schedule. First, break the building down in to three major categories: interior, exterior and equipment/ mechanical.

Let's start with our maintenance audit of the interior. Critical items on our list should include the following:

**SAFETY AND HEALTH ITEMS:** Ensure emergency exit lights are working, emergency exit signage is properly lit and fire extinguishers are current and properly tagged. Replace loose tile or carpeting, as well as missing or failing grout on tile surfaces. Check for water stains on interior building surfaces and moldy smells anywhere in the building. Ensure you are getting proper hot water from your fixtures, and create a schedule for inspecting grease traps and hoods.

**MECHANICAL SYSTEMS:** This list will vary greatly between restaurant concepts. Some major items include your HVAC equipment, filters, fryers, microwaves, exhaust hoods and ice machines. Ensure freezers are at the correct temperature and stoves and pilot lights are functioning properly. For specific maintenance schedules, make sure you have the name and model number of the equipment and research the manufacturer. Typically, they will have an annual maintenance list available. On new equipment, be sure to follow the maintenance required to maintain the warranty.

For exterior maintenance, we can further break down our list to the building exterior, roof, parking lot and landscaping.

**THE BUILDING EXTERIOR:** Cracks and voids in the facade can become entry points for water and pests, so they should be addressed immediately. Review sealants around all penetrations, including windows, doors and utility equipment. Even a hole the size of a pin can become a big deal, as a moderate rainstorm with 45-mile-per-hour winds can allow a full gallon of water into the building every five minutes. In addition, clogged gutters can cause slip-and-fall incidents and, during freezing temperatures, can lead to significant roof damage from ice damming. Keep an eye out for peeling paint, which removes the protection from the building facade and decreases the life expectancy of the siding (while also detracting from the brand). Look for any moisture intrusion points, and connect them to any water staining or moldy smells identified during the interior audit.

Review the condition of your roof at least once a year, since it takes the greatest abuse from Mother Nature. Think about it: Your roof gets tortured with every rain, thunderstorm, snow or wind event you have. Look for proper drainage—without evidence of ponding. All roof drains should be free of debris, and roofing material seams should not be separating. Parapet caps should be sound, and seams should be sealed. Electrical boxes should have covers on them. In addition, be sure to keep your roof clean and uncluttered. The roof should not be used as a storage space, and all garbage—even the tiniest of screws—should be removed. This is a good time to check all the mechanical systems on the roof. HVAC duct work, rooftop ventilation and AC drain lines should all be in good working order.

**PARKING LOTS AND SIDEWALKS:** Monitor these valuable assets on a regular basis. Remember, raised curbs and side walks and spalling asphalt and concrete are trip-and-fall hazards. Address any failed sealants at expansion joints, and look for sinking surfaces around parking lot drains, which indicate there could be a larger problem with a failed drain, sewer or waterline. Parking lot and building lights are critical for customer and employee safety. Watch for busted lights and burnt-out bulbs, which can deter customers from venturing into the establishment.

**LFLNDSCFLPING.** While it may not seem like a big deal, overgrown landscaping can hide problems such as pests and can even cause building damage. A good landscaping maintenance program can prevent small troublesome issues, such as tree limbs resting against the roof line, from becoming a lot more serious.

#### LEHRN MORE

There are always opportunities for improving your knowledge of building maintenance. The RFMA CRFP online learning modules breaks all these areas down into bite-sized categories, making it an invaluable tool for your next building maintenance review. RFMA's member directory lists vendors that can assist you with building maintenance, broken down by vendor specialty or company name.

Keith Moore is the President of US Exterior Maintenance and Repair, LLC, which specializes in exterior building restorations, including Dryvit/EIFS and stucco. He has 30 years of experience in construction and is highly active in RFMA and RFMA Gives. In addition to US Exterior, Moore is also the managing member of Engineering Support Services, a professional engineering firm.