



The Hidden Costs of Aging Buildings

A Preventive Maintenance Checklist That Matters

by ARC Facilities

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Older buildings rarely fail all at once. More often, small issues go unnoticed until they become costly repairs, safety concerns, or operational disruptions. A consistent preventive maintenance routine helps facility teams stay ahead of aging infrastructure, extend the life of building systems, and avoid unnecessary surprises. This checklist, with ideas from facilities professionals in the field, is designed to help teams identify common trouble spots early and keep buildings operating reliably.

Preventive Maintenance Checklist for Older Buildings

- Can maintenance staff quickly locate accurate shut-off valves, disconnects, panels, and equipment documentation during an emergency?
- Are HVAC, electrical, plumbing, roofing, and other aging building systems being inspected and maintained on a consistent schedule?
- Have recurring failures, temporary repairs, or deferred maintenance issues been reviewed to prevent larger outages, safety risks, or operational disruptions?
- Are fire alarms, sprinklers, extinguishers, and emergency lighting inspected, tested, and fully compliant?
- Are electrical panels, valves, and critical equipment clearly labeled and free from obstructions?
- Are as-builts, one-lines, and O&M manuals current and available to staff when needed?
- Are electrical systems routinely evaluated through infrared scanning, breaker testing, and load reviews to identify overheating or overload risks?
- Are roofs, foundations, and building envelopes regularly checked for leaks, cracks, moisture intrusion, or signs of deterioration?
- Are generators, UPS systems, and backup power systems tested regularly to ensure readiness during outages?
- Are energy performance trends being reviewed to identify inefficient systems or equipment nearing failure?

- Are work order trends analyzed to uncover recurring issues that may point to larger systemic problems?
- Are older systems periodically reviewed to confirm they still meet current safety and regulatory requirements where applicable?

Insights From the Field

“Knowing the age and condition of equipment is critical,” said Gretchen Martin from [CBRE](#). “Is it original? How soon are we going to need to plan for full replacement versus repair?” She also noted that many older buildings still operate with outdated equipment that may no longer be running efficiently. In many cases, the cost of replacement can be recovered through better efficiency, sustainability, and lower operating costs. Martin also emphasized the importance of accurate diagrams and plans, especially in buildings that have changed ownership multiple times over the years.

Facilities & Lean Six Sigma specialist Mason Merrill stressed the importance of visibility and preparedness in aging facilities. “Life safety systems, backup systems, documentation accuracy, and electrical system health all need ongoing attention,” Merrill explained. He also pointed to work order trends as an often-overlooked source of insight, helping teams identify larger systemic issues before they escalate into major operational problems.

Facilities teams responsible for older buildings know that preventive maintenance is only as effective as the information behind it. When shut-offs, diagrams, manuals, and critical asset information are difficult to find, even routine maintenance can become time-consuming and risky. [ARC Facilities](#) helps facilities teams instantly access building plans, O&M manuals, equipment documentation, and critical infrastructure information from any mobile device, helping teams respond faster, reduce downtime, improve preparedness, and keep aging buildings operating safely and reliably.

Three Questions Every Facilities Team Should Ask About Older Buildings

1. If a major system failed today, could your team immediately locate the right shut-off, panel, or documentation without delays?
2. Are we addressing the root causes of recurring maintenance issues, or just reacting to symptoms as they appear?
3. Do we have the visibility and documentation needed to make smart decisions about repair versus replacement before failures occur?

If you're answering “no” to these questions, then you may need some help with a closer look at how your team is operating. Check out our [free facility risk assessment](#) to help uncover where there may be risks or inefficiencies.

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