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Western Specialty Contractors Offers Advice on How to Add Building Envelope Inspections to a Maintenance Program

(St. Louis, MO, July 18, 2019) Building inspections don't seem to get the respect they deserve, as people often think they're a waste of time or are unnecessary. Maybe it's because inspections are usually used to find small problems, and people don't want to take the time to look for problems where there appear to be none. That is exactly why building inspections are so powerful.

"Inspections prevent significant problems from ever happening. They give building owners and facility managers a clear picture of their current and future maintenance needs, instead of them just hoping that they don't have any expensive repairs this year," said Teddy Williams, Western Specialty Contractors Content Marketing Manager. "The building manager is in control of which projects they do and when they do them, instead of just waiting for a system failure that puts them in a corner with no options."

Because building inspections prevent significant problems from ever happening, building managers need to be proactive when it comes to inspections. A good maintenance program is based on preventing unnecessary costs for owners and avoidable disruptions for tenants.

"Reacting to major problems rarely works, but strategic preventative maintenance does. For building managers, a solid building inspection plan is one of the first things you'll want to make sure you have in place. If you're starting a brand-new maintenance program from scratch, I'd actually recommend that you put building inspections in place even before you make your budget or annual work plan," said Williams.

First: What is a Building Inspection?

A building inspection is when you take an inventory of your major building components and record necessary information about their current condition. Every year, you should log each component's state and compare it to the previous inspection. That makes a building inspection an excellent tool for making sure small problems don't turn into expensive repairs.

You can track a component's deterioration over time so that you can intervene before it completely stops working. That way you can avoid damages to other parts of the building envelope and the interior, which means you're preventing both unnecessary cost for owners and avoidable disruptions for tenants.

Why Would a Building Inspection Ever Come Before a Budget or Annual Work Plan?

The job of the building inspection is to look at the condition of each component, determine if any are in bad condition (so you can prevent an expensive problem from turning into a costly one), and identify what needs to be repaired or replaced so you can efficiently use your budget to lower repair costs next year, thus paving the way for a cost-effective maintenance program.

"If you put together your budget and annual work plan, but an emergency repair pops up, to some extent you've wasted your effort. On the other hand, if you get a clear picture of what your maintenance needs are, you can come up with your priorities before anything else is in place. Your later work with budgeting and planning can be translated into lower maintenance costs this year and in the future," said Williams.

What Kind of Information Do You Need to Capture From Your Building Inspection?

The most effective inspections include the traditional "inventory" of building components. This may involve something as simple as taking a picture of the component and comparing it to ones from the previous inspection, or involving a specialty contractor or engineer to inspect each component's condition.

A building component inventory should determine the condition of a component and not any changes from the previous inspection. It should also include the component's age and its typical useful life. That way, you can plan for replacing a component well in advance.

Western recommends doing a building inspection once a year, a couple of months before annual budgets are due. This lets you easily make an accurate budget, and also gives you reliable information you can take to the owner to ask for more resources if need be. A building inspection also gives you a tool for improving the bottom line for this year and the future.

Your Homework

A simple spreadsheet is a terrific tool for keeping all of the building inspection information in one place, making it really easy for you to use. The spreadsheet should be simple and easy for the team to digest at a glance. Stick to the most essential and useful information – think about if the components' conditions warrant action this year and what the consequences will be if nothing is done.

For assistance in creating a building envelope inspection, contact the Western Specialty Contractors branch location nearest you: <http://www.westernspecialtycontractors.com/western-locations/>. For more information on building inspections, check out Western's latest newsletter: www.westernspecialtycontractors.com/newsletter-1/.

About Western Specialty Contractors

Family-owned and operated for more than 100 years, Western Specialty Contractors is the nation's largest specialty contractor in masonry and concrete restoration, waterproofing and specialty roofing. Western offers a nationwide network of expertise that building owners, engineers, architects, and property managers can count on to develop cost-effective, corrective measures that can add years of useful life to a variety of structures including industrial, commercial, healthcare, historic, educational and government buildings, parking structures, and sports stadiums. Western is headquartered in St. Louis, MO with 30 branch offices nationwide and employs more than 1,200 salaried and hourly professionals who offer the best, time-tested techniques and innovative technology. For more information about Western Specialty Contractors, visit www.westernspecialtycontractors.com.

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