

Section 15:

Church Property Maintenance Guidelines

The Book of Order Chapter 16.3(1) states that the Church Council (Board of Managers or Property Committee) is responsible for the care and maintenance of all property of the congregation.

Building materials deteriorate over time, some more quickly than others. Scheduled inspections and regular maintenance are the key to preserving the value of your congregation's property.

- It prevents unexpected damage and deterioration and expensive repairs.
- Damage to a building because of inadequate maintenance is not covered by insurance.
- If your premises look good, more people will want to visit.

The following guidelines and checklist will help you manage your congregation's property maintenance.

Exterior

Roof defects let in moisture, leading to rot and possible damage to electrics. Ensure that:

- Roof tiles are undamaged and firmly held in place.
- Roofing iron is well painted and securely nailed down.
- Bitumastic felt (Butynol) roofs are not cracked.
- Flashings are adequate, clean and rust-free.
- Gutters and down pipes are clear and in good order.

Exterior walls benefit from a regular wash down. When having this done, check that:

- Weather boards are free of rot and cracks and the paintwork is in good repair.
- Brick and block work is free of settlement cracks.
- Mortar in brick and block work is sound.
- All flashings are adequate and free of rust.
- Doors and windows are water-tight.

Interior

- Doors and windows should open and close easily.
- Identify and remove tripping hazards in accessways.
- Emergency exits must be clearly marked and never blocked.
- Buildings need continuous ventilation, particularly when locked up for long periods.
- Secure bookcases and other equipment that is on shelves or affixed to walls or ceilings, e.g. speaker boxes or heaters that could fall during an earthquake.
- Have the electrical wiring and fuse/meter board regularly checked by a certified electrician (especially for older buildings).
- Smoke alarms must be in working order and checked regularly (replace batteries once a year).
- First Aid kit must be clearly marked, easily found, and kept well stocked. Consider installing a portable defibrillator.
- Fire-fighting equipment must be easily accessible, of sufficient capacity and in good working order.

Building Warrant of Fitness

- If a building e.g., church hall requires an annual Warrant of Fitness, diary this for annual renewal.
- Engage a qualified certifier to ensure this is completed to local Council requirements.

On the ground

- Ensure that surface water is channeled away from the building.
- Keep underground drains clear and in good working condition. Repair any cracked or damaged pipes caused by tree roots as promptly as possible. Potential foundation subsidence could occur due to the loss of ground support arising from erosion.
- Keep plants and shrubs away from the side of the building.
- Check ventilation under the building is adequate.
- Keep access safe by levelling uneven paths and clearing paths, steps and stairs of moss etc.
- Keep trees and hedges trimmed to prevent hiding places or visual barriers behind which break-ins can take place.
- Keep rubbish bins locked away (where rubbish bins are kept next to a building and arson results, insurance companies may refuse to pay out).

Building records and other documentation

- A photographic record and copies of all important documents for all property under your care should be stored off site in case of a natural disaster.
- Copies of plans (including renovations) and important building documentation should be held in a safe location, both on-site and offsite, and copied electronically as a back-up. Plans can be lost, even when stored on-site.
- Plans are very helpful to engineers and others who may initiate repair work or undertake building assessment.
- For each building, keep a file of basic information e.g. age of building. Google street view photos and sky shots are helpful in providing a rough plan.
- Keep a schedule of building contents and update this frequently. This should include date and cost of furniture and equipment purchases. Store a copy of the schedule off site. Photos of the interior and its contents are also valuable.
- If there is a major incident, take photos of the damage as soon as possible and document what has happened.

Funding major maintenance projects

Please ensure that a reasonable sum for scheduled and unforeseen repairs or maintenance is included in the annual budget. Note that:

- Any property expenditure over \$50,000 requires the approval of your Church Council, congregation, Presbytery and the Church Property Trustees.
- Property capital funds (held in a Presbyterian Investment Fund account) may be used for major maintenance projects only with the approval of your presbytery and the Church Property Trustees.

Annual Maintenance Checklist

- ☐ The building inspection and maintenance programme is up to date and implemented
- ☐ Roof inspected and any defects fixed
- ☐ Gutters, downpipes and stormwater drains clear
- ☐ Exterior paint work in good order all round
- ☐ Doors and windows watertight
- ☐ Accessways are clear of hazards and exits marked appropriately
- ☐ Adequate ventilation under the building and through interior
- ☐ Electrical wiring inspected and tagged
- ☐ Smoke alarms and other fire-fighting equipment in good working order
- ☐ Shelves, bookcases and cupboards secured to walls or ceilings
- ☐ Freestanding equipment is secured
- ☐ Rubbish bins secured away from the building
- ☐ Grounds, including paths, steps and stairs, are tidy
- ☐ Building Warrant of Fitness current
- ☐ Building records and other important documentation is up to date with a copy offsite and an electronic back-up