

Winter Weather Maintenance Checklist



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By Steve Fontaine

With snow already falling in several places across the country and the holidays upon us, many facility managers in cold weather locales have already prepared their buildings and grounds for winter weather. And to ensure effective winter weather maintenance and operation throughout the coming months, facility managers should be sure to check the items listed below.

From snow to cold temperatures, many of nature's winter realities can create problems for commercial buildings. Here are some tips to help facility staff prepare for the changes that winter brings and ensure buildings are prepared.



Inspect The HVAC System

When temperatures start to fall, the building needs to be kept warm enough to keep people comfortable and product protected. Buildings are responsible for 39% of total energy use in the United States, and in the winter much of the energy costs a building generates are due to heating. This is the time to ensure that HVAC systems are ready to handle the demands during cold months.

The best way to make sure the system is efficient is to hire a contractor familiar with commercial HVAC systems to inspect and optimize the system before the coldest months of winter hit. This will protect the facility from unnecessary outages and inflated heating costs.

Eliminate Wasted Heat

In addition to checking the heating system, it is prudent to have the facility checked for drafts, leaks, and cracks that can allow heated air to escape buildings. Signs of frost around exterior walls, for instance, can mean there is an insulation issue or a draft. Taking care of these will limit wasted energy throughout the cold weather months.

Check Gas Lines

In a facility that uses gas heat, if that gas stops flowing to a facility there is no way to heat the building. Staff should check gas lines and gas line connections for signs of corrosion. If any are in need of replacement, have corrosion-free options installed to limit future problems.

Inspect the Roof

Roofs take a beating in the winter. Flat roofs, common on many commercial buildings, need regular inspection and maintenance. Make sure the roofs do not have areas where ice or heavy snow will pile up. After the initial inspection, schedule weekly inspection for the entire season, looking for built-up water, ice, or snow that can create problems.

After inspecting the roof, make a plan for snow removal on that surface. While the sun may melt the snow on some days, a heavy snow can take time to melt. Failure to remove the snow can lead to water standing on the roof after it melts. Also, the weight of the snow can impact the roof's structural integrity. Also, make sure that the drains remain clear all winter. ❌

Protecting a slanted roof is similar. Inspect roof vents and shingles before the snow falls, and check all of the waterproofing seals on the edges of the roof. It is also prudent to install ice check breakers to protect customers and employees. Then, make sure all drains and gutters are clear. Unless there is a particularly heavy snowfall, it should not be necessary to remove snow off a slanted roof. Just let gravity do its job.

Prepare For Lost Power

Lost power in the winter can lead to frozen pipes and lost inventory. Ensure that power to critical systems stays on with a working generator. Strong storms, ice on power lines, and other winter weather related problems can lead to inconvenient power outages. Also, ensure the facility is protected from surges with properly installed surge protectors.

Prepare For Snow Removal

Is there a snow removal plan in place? Make sure that the employee or contractor who will tackle this knows exactly what is expected. Keep safety as the first priority to ensure that employees and customers are not at risk even when snow falls. Walkways, first and foremost, must be clear. Also, have a planned place to store excess snow that is removed.

Clean Entrances

During snowy weather, employees, customers, and others will track in ice and snow. Have absorbent rugs in place to pick up some of this, and ensure that regular cleaning of entrances occurs throughout the day. Wet floors pose a slip-and-fall hazard that is best avoided.

❌ Keeping a facility up and running in winter requires careful thought and planning. With these tips, the facility management department will be well prepared for whatever winter sends its way.

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