

Guide

The Ultimate Guide to a Strong Building Inspections Program

Introduction

Property managers today can't afford to wait until something breaks to address it. However, that's too often the case, in situations where inspections aren't completed – or worse, weren't even planned in the first place. Property teams who don't have a planned inspection program are opening themselves to many risks including reactively grappling with equipment that breaks down prematurely.

Here's Why Inspections Are Critical to Your Business:

- ✓ **Standards and laws:** There are certain standards and regulations that your building and equipment must comply with. It is important to examine your building and equipment against certain standards and ensure that rules are being followed.
- ✓ **Safety and Reliability:** The safety of your building occupants is critical. Perform building inspections to ensure the availability, safety and reliability of your assets, and the sustainability of your building's operations.
- ✓ **Prevention of Bigger Problems:** Most importantly, doing inspections proactively, not just after something had been reported or fixed, helps find problems before they impact the customer experience. This saves you time and money in the long run.

When Inspections are not Helpful

Unfortunately, there are multiple reasons why inspections are less impactful than they should be. The number one reason is that they just don't get done. More properties than not are not inspected in a comprehensive way, which is surprising given that the benefits dramatically outweigh the time and effort to inspect regularly. Another issue is that staff may be unclear on what to inspect and how to do it. It is important to not assume your staff is knowledgeable in there are – be sure to provide regular training and oversight.

Lastly, inspections that are completed are sometimes stuck in the filing cabinet and never reviewed. Or the data collected isn't used for decision-making or as a point of historical reference for the future of inspections. As they say, "you can't manage what you can't measure" – ensure you are completing regular inspections with well-trained staff, and then using the information you collect to make more informed decisions about your assets.

Type of Inspections:

1. Proactive Inspections – General Conditions

Proactive inspections concerning the general condition of your property are aimed at identifying issues and correcting them before customers are impacted, allowing them to focus on their core business. Vacant space, foundations, HVAC systems, grounds, roofs, to name a few, should be part of your general conditions inspection list.

2. Proactive Inspections – Safety and Comfort

These tasks are typically done prior to the start of a day in order to keep people safe and happy during the workday. For example, evaluating properties and overall equipment health to ensure safe conditions in and around buildings as well as safe operating status of equipment. Items on this list include building security, fire and life safety, hazardous materials inspection, and OSHA inspections.

3. Preventive Maintenance

These are done with a list of tasks designed to ensure that the targeted useful life – as listed by the manufacturer – can be achieved. Like your car, each piece of equipment has a recommended maintenance schedule with tasks to be completed at specified intervals. However, your car – one piece of equipment – is easier to maintain than thousands of assets in a typical building. If inspections are skipped, your equipment is more likely to fail faster – a significant cost factor for asset management and capital budgeting.

Proactive and Preventive Maintenance are quite different

Proactive inspections mean that you are checking to make sure everything is working properly upfront by taking measurements and ensuring the equipment is actually turned on and running as expected. If you spot a problem during proactive inspections, make sure to create a new work order so that the problem is addressed before it impacts customers. Preventive maintenance on the other hand is conducted by actually performing maintenance on your equipment. You can think of proactive inspections like the required annual state inspection on your car vs. preventive maintenance tasks like oil changes or rotating your tire.

Bonus Tip: Don't Skip Safety Procedures for Inspections

It's important to know that the people doing work on your behalf are properly trained, insured and certified. For example, it isn't enough to have a system with an "inspectors trained" box checked off for lock out/tag out procedures, without the business processes and transparency to know that information is actually accurate.

Another example: in the event of a workplace injury, finding out that an inspector was not properly trained for the task during which the injury occurred is detrimental, but it's even worse if your system falsely indicates that they were trained. Ensure that you're protecting yourself with safety procedures in place.

6 Steps to a Successful Property Inspection

1. Create an initial equipment list in a digital format, including all manuals, warranty information, recommended maintenance, purchase costs, estimated useful life, etc.
2. Do an initial walkthrough to plan the inspection route. Think beyond the equipment and put yourself in your customers shoes. What would impact your experience? That means everything needs to be operational, clean and safe.
3. Create your inspection log, understanding what should be done, daily, weekly, etc. This will ensure you are covering everything that needs attention on specific schedules. Also, you should continually update your inspection log to account for any additional tasks that may have popped up over time.
4. Walk the route with your staff and observe what they do. It's important for your team to complete items on the punch list, but it's equally as important for them to know to look for things that are not on the list. For example, explaining the sounds to listen for that indicate a performance issue.

5. Create needed work orders as you go. Track these as a different kind of corrective work called proactive work. By categorizing these work orders differently, you can assess (and reward) your staff if they go beyond the list to identify issues before they become bigger problems.

6. Use data to optimize your property and equipment assets. Understanding the data can help you make more informed decisions and proactively address issues before they affect the tenant experience.

The most effective property inspection programs successfully incorporate and take advantage of technology to manage this plan. The right property management technology manages inspections by automating the scheduling process, tracking the team member responsible for inspections, the status of inspections, due date or inspections, and completion time.

From paper to walkie talkies to today's mobile apps and technology, inspections have become more automated and effective over the years. In between paper processes and today's apps, there was the initial digital phase – the transition from paper log sheets to exact digital copies – a big step in the right direction, but not automated. Today's real-time technology can alert you proactively to any problems needing attention. Ignoring innovative property operations technology to help you with a successful inspection program will leave you in the dust as competitors propel forward.



ADDRESS

Building Engines HQ
33 Arch Street, Suite 3200
Boston, MA 02110