

As we continue in our quest to serve as a resource for community associations, our second edition of *Common Foundations* focuses on a pre-spring maintenance checklist. The light of warm weather is at the end of the tunnel! Our maintenance plan will help your association recover from winter and prepare for the longer days and warmer nights that are just around the corner (we promise).

We also spotlight a historic condominium association in Philadelphia, which was the subject of an interesting "update" to their reserve study. Hiring a Professional Engineer proved invaluable as this Board took the necessary steps to protect their assets.

With over 50 million Americans living in an association, a clear vision and detailed plan for your community is more necessary than ever.

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Spring Into a Maintenance Schedule

WINTER is drawing to a close, and your residents are eager to replace the snow shovels with tennis rackets. However, it's not too late to implement an on-going maintenance plan that will save your association time and money for many seasons to come.

View your association as a complete network with many important pieces working together, and ensure that each system is functioning properly.

Here are 10 things your community can do now to keep your association in spring-ready shape:

Drainage pathways. Clearing out your drains on a regular basis will ensure they are free of debris when spring rolls around. March and April are notorious for high quantities of rain no matter where you live! For communities located in snowy areas of the country, the additional water from the snow runoff can equal a great stress on the community's drainage system. Avoid the potential of



blocked drainage systems by habitually cleaning them every other month.

Gutter and downspout repairs. Cleaning gutters is never an easy task but it's a necessary one with spring rainfall! Try reaching into the gutter with a pair of large tongs to dig out leaves; placing a garden hose and turning on the water full-blast also works (but watch out below!).

While you're on the ladder, inspect all spikes, straps, and clips to ensure that they

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Spotlight On..... Philadelphia

The term "updated reserve study" took on a new meaning with a prominent Philadelphia condominium association's request for a their three building 32-story property. Criterium-Bustamante Engineers submitted a proposal for what they believed to be an update, with a site visit, to an outdated reserve study.

Greg Bustamante, P.E., who owns and operates the Pennsylvania office, met with the Board twice to discuss his proposal and the association's true objectives. As this was Greg's first contact with the property, he was surprised to learn that the association was actually responsible for 158 common elements,

far more than the original study called for! Through subsequent site visits and meetings, Greg and his team drew up an enhanced reserve study plan, tailored specifically to this complex.

Due to a thorough site analysis, the maintenance staff is able utilize the study for their everyday maintenance of the buildings and grounds. The Board received a solid 20-year funding plan and is on the track to financial stability.

The list of common elements should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, not just during a large project. Board members change, but your reserve fund should remain stable.

MAINTENANCE: Warming up From Winter

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are securely fastened.

Close the foundation vent covers until summer. In the Mid-west and Southern states, foundation vent covers are often left open during the summer months to allow for ventilation and airflow. However, in the winter and spring, the vent covers should be closed to prevent the warm inside air from leaking out. Closing your vent covers during the winter will save on energy and heating costs.

If you have a basement, check your sump pump regularly to ensure its operation throughout the rainy season. The snow run off (or rain in warmer climates) can create an overload of moisture that your sump pump may not be able to handle. Perform monthly inspections of the pump by opening the sump pit's cover to clear any debris out of the bottom of the pit.

Replace snow stakes. It's a common mistake to replace the snow stakes only once a year, usually at the beginning of winter. The stakes can be the first thing to be damaged after a heavy snowfall, particularly if the payloader knocks it over!

Do not remove snow from roof. Snow removal can be the cause of more damage than the actual snowfall itself. Most buildings are designed to handle snow, and it is very rare that even a large storm will dump enough snow to cause damage that will seriously harm your homes' roofs. Let the snow melt naturally with the April rain and warmer temperatures.

Landscaping plans. For associations in more temperate climates, the landscaping can often take a hit during the cooler months. Recover quickly by bringing in your local specialist and discussing the various shrubs and flowers that will need to be planted in spring.

Send out paint bids for summer work. The major advantage to getting your bid requests out early is the extra time and accessibility your vendors are likely to have. Outside work requests often drop during cold weather, and getting a head start will ensure your association is at the top of their list during the summer rush!

Security enhancements. Now is the ideal time for associations to make the security enhancements they've been thinking about all winter. Security fencing and an alarm system are two timely projects for the post-winter months.

Replace smoke detector batteries. The batteries in all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors should be changed at least twice a year. The changing seasons are the perfect reminder to replace all batteries throughout the association.

Many maintenance projects have a double bonus – they will improve the appearance of your association while preventing costly repairs or replacements down the road. By undertaking some maintenance tasks now, you can lessen the costs that many associations rack up in the rush to recover from winter.

Get a head start on
summer projects by
sending out bids now.

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