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A Permanent Fix

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One often hears tales of maintenance personnel being greeted in the morning by water leaking into the school building — just hours before students and teachers arrive. Staff members pull out water vacuums, position garbage containers to catch water dripping from the ceiling, rearrange furniture, pick up saturated ceiling tile, and remove books and other items in an attempt to minimize costly interior damages.

Eventually, the staff gets the situation under control, and the building is ready for students and teachers to enter safely. However, in many cases, the work is just beginning. The staff now needs to document the damages, replace damaged items, and arrange for repairs.

Sound familiar? Roofing problems are crises that all school and college administrators dread. Temporary repairs mean unplanned and unbudgeted expenditures, such as wages and material damages, that drain school budgets.

Establishing preventive-maintenance programs for a building envelope can circumvent the need for costly crisis maintenance. Preventive maintenance will save you money, reduce stress and create a safer environment.

Get with the program

With a building envelope preventive-maintenance plan, a school facilities manager can analyze the life-cycle costs of building components to ensure they are being used most efficiently. Whether you train and use your own staff or use a roofing professional to carry out the plan, you will save money that can be put to better use for the long-term benefit of the facility.

Roofing professionals can prepare an in-depth evaluation that will identify needed repairs, replacements, and maintenance and budget forecasts. This information will enhance long-term maintenance management of your facilities and help prevent damage from deferring maintenance and repairs.

By conducting routine inspections and by following through on the recommendations for maintenance and repairs, school officials can avoid a crisis-management mentality. You will gain greater control of your time and your finances.

The costs associated with repairing roof leaks can be exorbitant, compared with planned maintenance. In the rankings below, annual inspections (\$) typically cost far less than the expense of repairing hidden structural damage (\$\$\$\$\$\$):

- **Costs associated with a roof leak:** staff wages (\$\$); ceiling repairs (\$\$); plaster repairs (\$\$); painting (\$\$); cleaning supplies (\$); flooring repairs (\$\$); potential concealed structural damage (\$\$\$\$\$\$); administration time (\$); furnishings (\$-\$\$\$\$\$\$); roof repairs (\$\$\$); air-quality concerns (\$-\$\$\$\$\$\$).

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- **Costs associated with preventive maintenance:** Initial evaluation program setup (\$\$\$); scheduled roof maintenance (\$-\$\$\$\$); annual inspections (\$).

The rankings do not identify replacement costs, but preventive maintenance has been proven to extend the life a roof system. Cost analysis shows that a roof that undergoes a preventive-maintenance program requires fewer dollars on a square-foot basis over its service life.

Fransen is a roof consultant with Mays Consulting & Evaluation Services, Inc., a consulting and engineering firm in Delaware, Ohio. The company specializes in designs, asset-management programs, and scheduling of maintenance for building envelope systems.

NOTABLE

▶ 22

Percentage of all public schools with roofs rated as less than adequate.

▶ 22

Percentage of elementary schools with roofs rated as less than adequate.

▶ 26

Percentage of secondary schools with roofs rated as less than adequate.

▶ 25

Percentage of rural/small town schools with roofs rated as less than adequate.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Condition of America's Public School Facilities: 1999.



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