

Essential Building Maintenance Focus Areas

School buildings have many systems and assets that require regular inspections, repairs, and replacements by the maintenance department. Your facility maintenance checklist should focus on all of the areas that are essential to safe, efficient, and uninterrupted operations.

HVAC Systems

Multiple studies have shown that classroom temperature directly affects student learning, so a properly functioning air conditioning and heating system is essential. Indoor air quality is equally important. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, poor air quality can influence student attendance, cause liability issues, and accelerate the degradation of school equipment.

For a heating and air system to function correctly, it must be kept clean and parts must be replaced as necessary. Some of the most important steps to maintain your HVAC system include:

- Cleaning intake and exhaust vents
- Cleaning coils
- Replacing air filters
- Inspecting fresh air intakes and removing obstructions

The summer is an excellent time to inspect your HVAC system and complete any necessary repairs. This allows students and staff to return to a comfortable classroom in the new school year.

Safety and Alarm Systems

Most public schools must meet legal requirements for safety and alarm systems to protect everyone inside the building. However, safety measures like alarms serve little purpose if you aren't certain that they work.

To protect students and staff from harm, schools must also utilize systems for security



and fire prevention and response. The devices and equipment tied to these systems are an integral part of your facility management, and they require maintenance steps, such as:

- Testing all fire alarms and holding fire drills
- Inspecting fire extinguishers
- Inspecting sprinkler systems for damage or leaks
- Testing door locks and security cameras

Many of the items on your school's facility maintenance checklist may overlap with your facility safety checklist. The two documents should work hand in hand to create a safe space for students to learn.

Water and Plumbing Systems

Functioning water and plumbing systems are vital for every school's ability to operate. Without them, kitchen staff can't prepare meals, bathroom facilities may be unusable, and students and staff may not have access to potable fresh water.

Compromised plumbing or water systems can also pose a health and safety threat. Outdated or unclean pipes and fixtures can contaminate the water supply with elements like lead, which, in turn, can cause illness for students and staff.

Facility maintenance teams should regularly clean water fountains and inspect them for damage. Water heaters and boilers require a more intensive maintenance plan, including:

- Checking for leaks
- Inspecting pipes for rust or corrosion
- Testing pressure release valves
- Recalibrating gauges and controls

Proper inspections, repairs, and upgrades of all water systems are vital components of a school's regular maintenance plan.

Electrical Systems

Your school's electrical system is perhaps the most important point of focus. Failed electrical equipment, wires, and circuits can not only cause the lights to go out and bring the school day to a halt but can also cause fires and electric shocks.

Depending on the skill set of your maintenance department, it may be necessary to bring in a certified electrician to conduct regular inspections and maintenance. Areas of concern include:



- Testing circuit breakers
- Inspecting plugs, switches, breaker boxes, extension cords, and cables
- Checking electrical equipment for damage
- Using thermographic scanning to identify overheating

Schools may also want to periodically inspect electrical systems and devices for efficiency as upgrades can considerably reduce energy usage costs.

Interior and Exterior Building

Depending on its size, the physical structure of a school campus might include several buildings, outdoor learning environments, athletic facilities, and parking areas. Each of these interior and exterior spaces should be included on your facility maintenance checklist.

On the outside of the building, inspect bleachers, gutters, playground equipment, and parking lots for damage, standing water, or compromised safety features like steps and railings. Indoor areas like locker rooms and restrooms should be regularly inspected, cleaned, and treated with disinfectant, as should desk tops and other surfaces in classrooms.

Doors, windows, and roofs should also receive regular attention. Checking for gaps, leaks, or cracks could help prevent a more costly problem down the line. Likewise, implement a regular pest control program to avoid infestations that could pose a health threat or damage structures. Finally, keep any hazardous materials in secure storage areas, and regularly check for leaks or spills.

Cafeteria Kitchen Assets

In order to provide nutritious meals for students, your school's cafeteria must always be in full working order. As such, refrigerators, freezers, ovens, and stoves should appear on your maintenance checklist.

A properly maintained refrigeration system is essential to keep food at the proper temperature. A malfunctioning refrigerator could result in food temperatures entering what's known as the "danger zone," which can result in bacteria growth that causes food poisoning.

Important steps for maintaining your school's refrigeration unit include:

- Inspecting the condensing unit to confirm that air is flowing properly
- Checking door hinges and seals



- Testing temperature controls
- Cleaning and replacing blades and evaporator coils as needed

The facility maintenance team should also inspect and clean other kitchen appliances, like ovens, on a regular schedule to prevent fires. Check wires, heating elements, and outlets for damage or melting.

Office Electronics Maintenance

While office electronics are less likely to pose a hazard to people within your school facilities, they can still cause a major inconvenience if they break down. Including your school's office electronics in your maintenance plan helps lower the likelihood that they will unexpectedly fail.

Dust is a major threat to common office equipment like computers, printers, and scanners, which can overheat without adequate airflow. Regularly clean these items with an electronic safe spray and a soft cloth. When you unplug your electronics to clean them, also inspect the electric cords for pinching or splitting.

It's also useful to ensure that all electronics are plugged into ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets, or that electronics are unplugged when not in use—especially in the event of oncoming storms.