



# Task Masters

Don't Procrastinate: Make Maintenance PM

[by Jack Carr, P.E., RS, LEED-AP]

**Some folks think Maine's fall is the best season of all.** Trees are changing colors, Friday night football games, and kids are back in school, but not everyone is happy. Those with the responsibility of maintaining condominium facilities know the anxiety of the fall season and all of the tasks needing to be done before the winter rushes in. They need to avoid the regrets about the painting project that never got contracted or the paving repairs that cannot be scheduled before the asphalt plant closes in November.

Routine maintenance is something many of us put off until it is too late. Whether it be your own car or even

your own body, it is easier to procrastinate and do things only when there are significant problems. The same is true for condominium associations. The pressure to keep maintenance expenses down, coupled with delinquent members or vacant units, means routine maintenance is often neglected.

However, since the board has a fiduciary responsibility to manage facility repair funds wisely, maintenance items should not be overlooked. Proper maintenance can often dramatically extend the life of common-element building components. A few examples come to mind.

■ **Pavement deterioration.** Failure to maintain walkways can lead to tripping hazards and related liability, not to mention poor curb appeal to buyers.

■ **Inadequate ventilation.** This is a common problem that causes moisture problems and overheating roof materials. Both are conditions leading to premature component failure.

■ **Decks, railings and connections.** Often, deck details such as improper ledger fastening or lack of flashing are such that they may encourage rot. Failure can be dangerous.

Because proper maintenance is so important for the quality of life of a condominium community, I suggest the board consider a change to its approach to maintenance planning and not continue to think of it as “routine” but rather “preventive maintenance” (PM). PM is proactive. PM is cost effective. PM will have a significant effect on the useful life of building components and will affect the useful life of some components by 50 percent or more.

### PM PHASES AND COMMUNICATION

For a PM program to be successful, it must proceed through three phases: Planning, inspection, and execution. The planning phase needs to focus on each of the major components to determine priorities and resources needed to review each component. As an example, the building(s) envelope needs to be broken down into the roof, exterior building cladding, windows, and decks. The planning phase defines the scope and schedule of the inspection phase.

The inspection phase will determine which component needs to be reviewed on a monthly or yearly cycle. Some items will be event-triggered. As an example, roofs will be inspected in the spring and fall and after each wind event of more than 50 miles per hour. Each inspection will have a written report to ensure it was done and document the history of each major component for future planning. These records will allow the more accurate preparation of repair scopes of work to aid contractors or design professionals needed to prepare detailed specifications and drawings.

The execution phase will not only be expedited by the completion of the prior phases but will also have a higher chance of being fiscally successful. The execution phase needs to define responsibly of overseeing repair projects, be financially sound, and ensure quality control through inspections and record keeping of repair progress.

When initially setting up the PM plan, the board should focus on

systems and community elements. Potential water damage from exterior and interior sources should be given high priority. Common HVAC and water heating systems should be next in priority followed by air filters and lighting fixtures and controls.

The most important aspect of a well-developed PM plan is that it is used. Both the board and owners need to buy into it and use it as an effective management tool. Part of this is to make the PM plan visible. Some associations post it on their website. One association I know created a poster with the PM maintenance schedule in bar charts graphically illustrating the

PM plan’s various line items to communicate the status of all of the repair projects. The schedule is posted in the common laundry room for all to see. As projects begin, the progress is demonstrated by coloring in the bars to illustrate the work of the board and the property manager which is equally visible.

As in any plan, good communication can be the most important element.



■ JACK CARR, P.E., RS, LEED-AP,  
IS SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT WITH  
CRITERIUM-ENGINEERS SERVING  
ALL OF NEW ENGLAND.

## Condominium Association Loans

Avidia Bank offers customized lending solutions at highly competitive rates and desirable terms to fund capital repairs and improvements for community associations throughout New England.

Howard will assist you in every phase of the process to find the loan to best fit your needs and a quick loan approval.

- Specializing in lending for complete building envelope projects
- Guidance and advice throughout each phase of the loan process
- Dedicated solely in working with property management firms
- Unconventional customized loan terms
- Peace of mind with an extended fixed rate amortization



**Avidia Bank**

800-508-2265 | [avidiabank.com](http://avidiabank.com)

Member FDIC | Member DIF | Equal Housing Lender



NMLS #422902