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q/a

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE Question of the Month



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Spring Cleaning

Q: *It seems like winter was brutal to the building that we own. There are several roof leaks, and our pavement is cracking. And that's just what we can see. Do you have any suggestions or checklists for winter recovery?*

A: You are wise to be thinking in this direction. A lot of damage from winter, whether a roof, HVAC equipment, paving or landscaping will only get worse without attention, and will therefore be much more expensive to eventually repair. So let's work our way through the major areas of commercial building maintenance. While our most important objective is prevent further damage to deteriorating systems, now is also the time to consider relatively inexpensive cosmetic improvements that can enhance the image of your business.

Now is the time to get a roofer on your roof, particularly if you have a flat roof. Most roofers will make this inspection free of charge. Vertical leaders and roof drains should be free of debris. There should be no ponding on the roof - standing water

is deadly to a roof. Blisters and alligatoring of the surface all must be addressed. Flashing should be properly sealed and attached. Any debris on the roof should be completely removed. Is it time to apply a fresh aluminum coating to reduce your energy costs?

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Paving does not last forever, but you can extend its life 50% by proper maintenance. We highly recommend power sweeping if sand was used during the winter. Sand is very abrasive to pavement (think "sandpaper".) All cracking should be sealed, and potholes repaired. Seal-coating may be warranted. Because of environmental issues, all line-stripping

paint today is water-based, which means it does not last as long as it used to. If your line-stripping is faded and hard to see, think about seal-coating with new line striping to follow. Curbs should be inspected for cracking or chipping due to snow plows. And take a look at your drainage wells and make sure that they are draining correctly.

You should have a maintenance contract for your HVAC equipment. All HVAC equipment requires regular maintenance. Now is the time for a service call to replace filters, check belts and take care of any other problems.

Landscaping is next. Underground sprinkler lines should be tested and readied for the season. Take note of dead stock and order replacement. Mulch in the beds is cheap, great for your plants, and looks great. Take a look around for dead or hanging limbs from trees.

A walk around your building is good idea. Look for loose mortar, peeling or loose caulking, or other signs of winter abuse. Are doors shutting correctly and are there any obvious signs of air infiltration? Water stains on the side of the building are indicative of drainage problems on the roof.

And if you really want your building to stand out, consider some low cost items such as painting sign posts, protective bollards, and curbs. And washing windows and planting flowers at your entrance way will also create a nice impression. Yes, spring is here, and as nature renews itself from the long cold winter, we can do the same with the buildings that we own or manage.

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