

## **A maintenance schedule can fend off condominium claims**

**Condominium complexes can help prevent equipment breakdown and overall degradation of the building and common areas by implementing a thoughtful and consistent maintenance schedule. The problem is, your residents might not know what the schedule contains and become antsy about issues they raise that don't get immediate attention. Alternatively, some residents get agitated when they see work getting done that they don't think needs to be done.**

How you manage your maintenance schedule can improve your residents' experience or become a source of complaints. Good communication between the manager, the board, and the residents is key.

Routine maintenance minimizes surprise breakdowns and replacement costs as well as the expenses due to emergency repairs or service. Trickle-down problems from ignored or unnoticed hazards or malfunctions are also reduced. Additionally, a good maintenance program will extend the life of your equipment and buildings. Sometimes the insurer who provides your equipment breakdown insurance will also provide an equipment maintenance schedule—potentially even discounts on service and needed repairs. You should be aware of, or be able to find, good professional support for an overall plant upkeep plan.

The condo board might want to make maintenance a regular agenda item to ensure it is a priority with the facility manager. Formally integrating resident complaints and requests is a helpful addition to a facilities upkeep program. Sometimes they will be aware of things that arise between inspections.

When those items are reported, it can be very helpful to have a written follow-up that acknowledges the notice and refers to the condo declarations regarding whose responsibility the item is. For example, it could be the case that the behavior or negligence of one unit owner is affecting another unit. That could be a little more complicated and time-consuming to deal with than if the problem falls under the facility manager's responsibility. In any case, a written record and some communication notifying parties involved that the manager is dealing with it could head off misunderstandings. A policy developed or approved by your legal counsel might be best. It's also important to keep in mind that when there is a known deficiency - a reported item - you have a responsibility to respond and resolve the issue rather than leave it open. This helps your insurance company defend you in actions brought against you in the form of a claim.

It's possible a resident-referred item is already on your maintenance schedule and can wait to be addressed. That may be a clear and judicious decision that saves the association money and keeps maintenance plans on track, but it could open you up to complaints from those who don't know the plan. In some cases, you might even find they take matters into their own hands then submit a claim for costs to you.

Many misunderstandings or rash actions can be avoided by clear and prompt communications and an explanation of the declarations in the condo covenants along with the official, approved maintenance schedule. Talk to your board and facilities manager about ways to implement and stick to an upkeep program, and—if you haven't already—check with your insurer to see if your equipment breakdown insurance covers professional preventive-service visits.

Posted by [Global Administrator](#) on 2/13/2015 7:25:23 AM