

Common Commercial Building Maintenance Questions

Randy Crocker, Principal Owner of Hassle Free Commercial Services, gets questions all the time from clients about their property and what they can do to save money, prevent fires, and keep their building running efficiently all while keeping their clients and employees happy. The following list addresses some of the most asked questions.

1. How can Energy Efficient Bulbs save us money?

If every American home replaced just one light bulb with an ENERGY STAR qualified bulb, the country could save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year, more than \$600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars.

- ENERGY STAR qualified bulbs use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.
- Reduction about 25% or more in electricity costs over a normal bulb.
- Produce about 75 percent less heat, so they're safer to operate and can cut energy costs associated with home cooling.
- Are available in different sizes and shapes in almost any fixture, for indoors and outdoors.

2. How many items can I safely plug into my electrical outlet?

Add up your amps! Most breakers are 20 amp breakers, (if you are not sure what yours are, check with your building maintenance professional) which means add up the amps required for each electrical device you are plugging in and make sure that the total does not exceed 20 amps. The amps used by your devices can usually be found on the side or bottom of the device, or in your owner's manual. Beware of space heaters, and microwave ovens, they use 14 amps – more than one on a single breaker will blow a fuse!

3. What can we do to practice fire safety in our building?

Fires can be avoided by following proper fire safety practices. The best method of fire prevention is the knowledge and elimination of fire hazards.

First, be sure to check your smoke detectors once a month and the batteries at least once a year. Smoke detectors sense abnormal amounts of smoke or invisible combustible gases in the air. Make sure they are installed on every floor, or are up to code per your county and state regulations. Also be sure that your smoke detectors are labeled by the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM).

The following Tips should be followed very carefully for fire prevention:

- Keep portable and space heaters at least 3 feet from anything that may burn. Never leave heaters on when you leave.
- If an electrical device begins to smoke or has an unusual smell, unplug it immediately and have it repaired.
- Replace frayed or cracked electrical cords and don't overload extension cords. They should also never be run under rugs.
- Comply with NO Smoking rules at all times. Usually, there are designated safe locations for smokers. Carelessly thrown cigarette butts are common causes of fires.
- Always have and maintain proper fire fighting equipment.
- Never block fire fighting equipment or exit doors.
- Lastly, consult your building maintenance professional or electrician for any changes to your fuse box.

4. How can we reduce our water and sewage bills?

Toilet flushing uses the most water in commercial and residential buildings. Replacing old 3.5 gallon toilets with new 1.7 gallon toilettes can drastically reduce your water bill. However, we only recommend doing this for smaller buildings. And remember, with less water being used, less sewage is generated and thus those fees are also reduced. Alternatives to traditional toilets include dual-flush and composting toilets, and waterless urinals.

Have your maintenance professional practice preventative maintenance, even more savings can be realized through stopped leaks. Other water cost saving methods can also be included on sinks, washing machines, dishwashers, ice makers and HVAC through automatic controls and with the purchase of energy star compliant appliances.

5. Our generator doesn't work when we need it to, what can we do?

Keeping the moving parts in your generator is very important. As parts remain motionless, especially in new generators, air can creep into a unit injector solenoid. Emergency Generators should be started up every week for about 5 minutes with transfer load testing every month. Every year a full load test should be completed. A good practice is to schedule this along with elevator testing.

In addition to running the generator on a monthly schedule, you should also perform the following general maintenance inspections and repairs:

- Inspect Radiator fins monthly
- Check antifreeze levels weekly
- Keep block heater plugged in and warm
- At a minimum change fuel filters annually
- Keep an eye out for wet spots around the fittings of the fuel system
- The indicator light should read okay on the battery charger
- Ensure tight, corrosion free connections on the battery and charging systems
- Make sure the engine itself, as well as the engine belts are free of wear and have signs of any leaks
- Check oil levels and change oil and oil filters annually
- Check the engine air filter once for every 100 hours of operation
- Change the Engine Filter at least once per year and that the canister is free of dirt and other debris

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About the Author

Randy Crocker, Principal Owner of Hassle Free Commercial Services, has over 27 years of experience in the commercial engineering field. HFCS are contractors specializing in industrial building maintenance, fire prevention, and repair on: HVAC, fire alarm systems, plumbing, emergency generators and electrical systems in Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia. Visit HFCS online at www.myhfcs.com. Online Marketing by www.tkm2.com.