

Whitepaper

# Rising trend of deferred maintenance in facility management

When it comes to budgets, practically every building manager has the same dilemma: doing more with less. Shrinking budgets are causing more facilities to delay general maintenance, system upgrades or building repairs to a future budget cycle—or even postponing them indefinitely until funding becomes available. But this trend in deferred maintenance is concerning. It can lead to safety hazards, inefficient operations, security breaches and lower satisfaction and comfort for those who use the building every day—all more costly and complex consequences than simply putting off a repair to the next budget cycle.



## Magnitude of the problem

Buildings.com reports that, on average, if you defer maintenance, you can expect future expenses to be equal to or greater than the cost of the part squared or 15 times the total repair cost. The estimate is based on David Tod Geaslin's Inverse-Square Rule for Deferred Maintenance.

Deferred maintenance only grows in scope—and cost—the longer it is prolonged. When a repair is delayed, it is still subject to the daily use and abuse of tenants and visitors. In fact, it's not uncommon for a "repair" to turn into a "replacement" because, in the process of being deferred, it becomes completely broken. Replacing a door, lock, window, etc., is much more costly than simply repairing it.

This rule can be illustrated in the following example:

A door closer is out of adjustment. Now, the door slams every time it closes. This damages other components, such as the latch, door jamb, door stop and weatherstripping. With the prolonged and repeated door slamming, the door frame becomes damaged and the latch no longer works. Now the entire door and frame need replaced. All this could have been prevented if the adjustment to the door closer had been made in a timely manner.

### Impact beyond the maintenance budget

It's not just the maintenance budget that's negatively impacted. The "Guidelines for Life Cycle Cost Analysis" report from Stanford University states that as a building or campus ages, the cumulative cost of operating and maintaining facilities significantly impacts the overall institutional budget. Even more, funds set aside to construct new campus buildings rarely extend to ongoing operational costs—necessary costs to maintain the facility and slow the decline of building utility and performance.

This phenomenon is particularly evident when repairs to mechanical and electrical systems are deferred, according to the *Handbook of Facility Assessment*. Deferring maintenance, especially in mechanical and electrical systems, frequently turns minor problems into major system failures. As the number of system failures increases, building owners and occupants push to have those systems replaced. Those facilities that have implemented comprehensive preventive maintenance programs have found that not only are the operation of their systems more reliable, but also those systems last longer.

### Preventative maintenance measures

Experts estimate that between two and six percent of an annual operating budget should be spent on preventative maintenance. An effective preventive maintenance program helps minimize a facility's rate of decay. It not only saves money, but it helps facilities to avoid replacement—which requires capital assets and often an extensive process from evaluation, design, funding and implementation.

By nature, preventative maintenance is the least disruptive, singular in resolution, planned for in advance and often includes training for future maintenance. Most of all, it helps reduce building failure and poor conditions that impact tenant and visitor experience.

### Periodic facility assessments

Building owners and managers should periodically use facility assessments to identify, evaluate and report on the condition of their building. Facility assessments evaluate existing conditions and identify any deficiencies. With this information, they can identify existing problems, develop budgets for future maintenance and capital renewal projects, and track deferred maintenance backlogs. All building components and infrastructures should be evaluated during an assessment. This includes mechanical and electrical equipment, building shell, interior structures and finishes, transportation systems, and building site.



### Smart security strategies

Deferred maintenance also directly affects building security. It increases the likelihood of security breaches, putting building assets, tenants and visitors at risk.

Because of this, it's important for building owners to invest in door hardware solutions that are designed for specific purpose, use and abuse, and expected lifecycle. Additionally, you'll want solutions and brands that:

- Offer repair/replacement parts for heavy use components
- Provide training on ongoing management and maintenance
- Easily expand in scale to accommodate future growth/expansion
- Offer flexibility to transition technologies, such as credentials and integrated applications

## Making the case

According to *Interiors & Sources*, a trade publication for the commercial design industry, the most convincing argument against deferring maintenance is one that includes the following:

- **Estimated risk potential:** Demonstrate how deferred maintenance could result in increased liability and safety hazards, decreased productivity or inefficient business operations.
- **Subsequent escalation of costs:** Calculate and predict future expenses resulting from postponed maintenance.
- **Historical data:** Provide examples from the past that prove the significance of the long-term costs of deferred maintenance.

Bottom line, the faster you conduct a repair, the better. The likelihood of incurring greater costs increases with each deferred maintenance. By making the business case for funding and proactively managing maintenance every day, you're less likely to develop a deferred maintenance backlog that seems too overwhelming to overcome. Most serious of all, forsaking preventative and routine maintenance will lead to buildings failing prematurely—and that's the most expensive of all.

[Contact an Allegion sales consultant](#) for smart security solutions for your building. In addition to providing some of the leading products in the commercial market, we offer product training and free consultation on building standards, code compliances and more.

For more information about classroom security, visit us at [us.allegion.com/industries/education](http://us.allegion.com/industries/education) or call 866-516-1597.

### Sources:

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