



# ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

## Safety and Loss Control News

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## The Importance of Routine Maintenance

Property losses play a large role in the claims incurred by parishes. The good news is that many of these losses can be avoided by performing routine maintenance to buildings and grounds. The following article highlights items that should be included in your routine maintenance plan.

### Sump Pumps

Install emergency battery back-up units on sump pumps throughout the parish where present, in an effort to avoid water damage as the result of an electrical outage during a storm. When possible, a second sump pump should be installed as well in the event the first pump fails. Sump pumps should be inspected as frequently as possible in order to identify a defective pump prior to a storm.

### Flood Protection

When possible, relocate as much archived material, valuable fine arts, electronics and any computerized equipment from basements in all buildings, where present, to ground floors or above to lower the risk of flood damage. This has been an ever-increasing area of losses for Archdioceses in past years due to severe storms. Although a flood may not be avoided, the losses may be significantly reduced by limiting the damage to contents in basements. In addition, old or no longer used storage materials should be removed from lower levels and disposed of to alleviate the material handling injuries that can occur following storm flood damage.

### Roof Inspection

Inspect flat roofs of buildings as well as gutters, downspouts and flashing in the late fall and early spring of each year, or as

needed, in an effort to lower the possibility of water damage. Where roofs are pitched, consideration should be given to having an outside roofing contractor periodically complete this same task. Water damage from faulty roofs, blocked gutters or downspouts and flashing which has pulled away from the building is one of the largest areas of losses to parishes and should be pro-actively addressed. In addition, roof drains on flat roofs should be routinely cleaned of leaves and other debris. Standing water on flat roofs leads to eventual roof leaks. ***The Parish should utilize a maintenance contractor approved by the Pastoral Center.***

### Contractors and Roofs

When contractors are completing roof work, the area should be inspected at the end of each work day when possible to check for security and fire concerns. Some possible examples are roof hatches that are left open, tarps that inadequately protect openings, ladders and/or scaffolding allowing unauthorized access, etc.

### Drains

Regular inspection and cleaning of exterior stairwell drains to basements should be conducted in an effort to lower the risk of flooding. In addition, where possible, downspout extensions should be long enough so that they drain water far away from the building. In addition, internal floor drains should be periodically rodded and ***cameras used*** as necessary. ***Every 2-5 years the system should be evaluated.***



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# The Importance of Routine Maintenance

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## Windows

A listing of each building's windows should be developed, which shows the age of the windows and any future replacement plan or maintenance needs. **Existing windows should be scraped, painted and caulked, if needed, to help avoid water damage.**

## Tuck-Pointing

A log should be maintained, which documents when buildings were tuck-pointed in the past and when consideration should be given to scheduling future work. The log should also show the name of the contractor, phone number and a copy of the contract and warranty.

## Contracts and Warranties

All contract and warranty information on significant purchases or projects completed in the parish should be maintained in the parish office files for future reference. Changes in personnel such as pastors, business managers, principals and buildings and grounds maintenance directors are quite common. New staff may not be aware of warranties and may take on the cost of a repair or replacement that would normally be covered by a warranty.

## Exterior Lighting

The exterior lighting should be inspected on a regular basis. Determine where additional light fixtures would be beneficial for security and theft deterrents. Many parishes have had their gutters and downspouts stolen. Exterior lighting is the first and often most effective means of defense against theft and vandalism. Where lights are not functioning, immediate repairs should be made.

## Extension Cords

Extension cords should not be used as part of a permanent wiring arrangement and represent a potential fire hazard. It is recommended that extension cords, if present, be removed from service and all electrical appliances be plugged directly into an approved electrical outlet or approved outlet strip equipped with built-in surge protection to eliminate the potential hazard. IN the past, many Archdioceses have experienced fires both large and small from the use/overuse of extension cords. Many of the buildings have electrical systems that are not able to handle the increased call for electricity that extension cords allow. If extension cords are needed to adequately meet the building's electrical requirements, then the electrical systems should be inspected and updated by a certified electrical contractor so as to provide ample

electrical service and electrical outlets for a building's electrical needs. **Electrical cords are also a trip and fall hazard and should be routed out of all foot traffic routes.**

## Church Organ

To avoid the risk of electrical fire, the church organ should be inspected periodically to determine if there are any defects in the motor, cords or electrical outlets. If an organ is no longer used, it should be disconnected from the electrical system or the breaker should be permanently turned off.

## Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Install carbon monoxide detectors in the rectory and convent sleeping area hallways, where not already present, to alert of a carbon monoxide leak. In addition, detectors should also be installed in all boiler rooms. In the school and/or office areas, the detectors should be present on each floor where the building has any source of carbon monoxide such as a fireplace, boiler or water heater. **The detector should be mounted high on the wall. It is recommended to use the Kiddy KN-COEG-3 detector.**

## Flammable Materials

Flammables should be correctly stored in NFPA metal cabinets. Unused and/or obsolete old paints and other flammables should be disposed of properly. Discourage the practice of storing paints and flammable chemicals for use at a later date. Purchase these products on an as-needed basis.

## Slips/Trips/Falls Outside

All sidewalks, handrails, steps and parking lots should be inspected on a regular basis. All noted hazards should be addressed to help ensure slips/trips/falls can be prevented. It is especially important to review the snow and ice removal plan for the winter. Off-hour activity times should also be addressed. **Pot holes in the parking lots are especially important to identify and correct based on past claims experience.**

## Slips/Trips/Falls Inside

All interior hallways, aisles, classrooms, steps and offices should be monitored on a regular basis to help ensure there are no slip/trip/fall hazards and that proper housekeeping is maintained. All noted hazards should be addressed to help ensure that slips/trips/falls are prevented. Walk-off mats should be especially noted to ensure they are in good repair and they have enough coverage for the entrance areas. Wet floor signs should be used anytime there is the possibility of this hazard.

# Using Extension Cords Safely



Extension cords are one of the most common electrical items found in today's buildings. From a safety standpoint, they are also one of the most misused. Their use often leads to shock, tripping accidents and electrical fires.

The safest way to use extension cords is not to use them at all. Avoid them whenever possible; and if they must be used, remember that they are approved only for temporary situations.

## Extension Cords—Basic Hazards and Safety Measures

1. Avoid using extension cords whenever possible. This is the best way to eliminate any problems.
2. They are designed for temporary situations only; not to provide permanent power. If additional wiring is required, have it installed.
3. Must be of adequate size to carry the load. If not, the insulation will break down from overheating, and eventually cause a short circuit and possibly a fire. The cord must be the same wire gauge or heavier than the power cord to which it is attached.
4. Use only UL approved cords.
5. Inspect before using. Reject if warm, frayed or broken.
6. Never use a spliced or patched extension cord.
7. Never nail or staple cords to walls or ceilings. This can damage the insulation and cause a short circuit.
8. Never run cords under rugs or carpets. Walking over them can break down the insulation and result in a short circuit.
9. Never connect more than one appliance to a cord. Multi-connections can easily overload the wiring.

As a rule of thumb, extension cords in use should not be warm or hot to the touch. This would indicate either undersized wiring for the load or poor connections. If major repairs or changes are needed, contact a qualified electrician.

# NFPA Smoke Alarm Safety Tips



*The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) states, "Smoke alarms save lives." The following safety tips pertaining to the safe use and operation of smoke alarms has been excerpted from the NFPA's website. For more information, contact the NFPA at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).*

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- An ionization smoke alarm is generally more responsive to flaming fires, and a photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection, both types of alarms or a combination alarm should be installed.
- Test alarms at least monthly by pushing the test button.
- Smoke rises; install smoke alarms following manufacturer's instructions high on a wall or on a ceiling. Save the manufacturer's instructions for testing and maintenance.
- Replace batteries in all smoke alarms at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps," warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Replace all smoke alarms, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they are 10 years old or sooner if they do not respond properly.
- Be sure the smoke alarm has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Alarms that are hard-wired (and include battery backup) must be installed by a qualified electrician.
- If cooking fumes or steam sets off nuisance alarms, replace the alarm with an alarm that has a "hush" button. A "hush" button will reduce the alarm's sensitivity for a short period of time.
- An ionization alarm with a hush button or a photoelectric alarm should be used if the alarm is within 20 feet of a cooking appliance.
- Smoke alarms are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. These devices use strobe lights. Vibration devices can be added to these alarms.

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If there are any subjects you would like to see addressed in this newsletter, or questions about a topic presented, please contact Ms. Amanda Weller, Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc., Two Pierce Place, Itasca, IL 60143, Telephone: 815-236-5170, Email: [Amanda\\_Weller@gbtpa.com](mailto:Amanda_Weller@gbtpa.com).

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## Proper Lifting Techniques

Exertion injuries from lifting, pushing, pulling, twisting, bending and turning while handling materials results in approximately 30% of injuries in the workforce.

Proper lifting techniques are critical to reducing your exposure to these types of injuries. Some of the factors that can cause serious back injuries when lifting improperly include: twisting and turning too much during a lift, move or transfer; lifting more than 40-45 pounds unassisted; reaching or stretching out of your work zone; and using an improper grip on the load you are moving.

When lifting objects, body posture and positioning plays a key role. The "Safe Lifting Zone" is an area within the body located between the mid-thigh and chest. Lifts should be made within the safe lifting zone whenever possible.

In addition to lifting objects within the safe lifting zone, remember to always lift material using the strength of

your legs and not your back. When lifting an object, always practice the following safe lifting techniques:

- Move in close to the load;
- Bend at your knees—not at your waist;
- Keep your back straight and avoid unnecessary twisting;
- Hold the load close to your body; and
- Lift the material using the strength of your legs, not your back.

If the material weighs more than 40-45 pounds, do not lift it. Rather, use a mechanical aid such as a dolly or "team lift" with someone who is equal in strength.

