
Post-Occupancy Maintenance Schedule

A Month-by-Month Guide for Your First Two Years

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1. Introduction: Why Proactive Maintenance Matters

Congratulations on completing your new church building project! The construction phase is behind you, but maintaining your investment is an ongoing responsibility that begins immediately. A well-maintained building not only protects the significant financial investment your congregation has made, but also ensures a safe, comfortable, and welcoming environment for worship, ministry, and community outreach.

Proactive maintenance is far more cost-effective than reactive repairs. Addressing small issues before they become major problems can save your church tens of thousands of dollars over the life of the building. Deferred maintenance compounds—a small roof leak left unchecked can lead to structural damage, mould growth, and interior finish replacement.

Typical Annual Maintenance Budget: Industry standards recommend budgeting **1–2% of your building's replacement value** annually for ongoing maintenance. For a building with a replacement value of \$3,000,000, that means allocating \$30,000–\$60,000 per year. This may seem significant, but it is a fraction of the cost of major repairs caused by neglect.

This guide provides a structured month-by-month schedule for the critical first two years after occupancy. Following this schedule will help you stay ahead of maintenance needs, protect your warranties, and establish good habits that will serve your congregation for decades.

HCMI TIP

Start a dedicated maintenance binder or digital folder on day one. Include all warranty documents, equipment manuals, as-built drawings, and this maintenance schedule. Assign a trusted volunteer or staff member as your building maintenance coordinator.

2. Month 1–3: Initial Period

The first three months are critical for identifying any construction deficiencies, establishing baseline performance data, and ensuring that all building systems are operating as designed.

Key Tasks

- **HVAC commissioning verification and balancing:** Confirm that all heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems are operating per the design specifications. Verify airflow rates, temperature differentials, and zone control accuracy.
- **Settlement crack monitoring:** New buildings settle. Monitor walls, ceilings, and floors for hairline cracks. Document their location and size with photos and measurements. Most are cosmetic and will be addressed during the warranty walkthrough.
- **Landscaping establishment:** Follow a consistent watering schedule for new sod or seed. Protect newly planted trees and shrubs. Monitor drainage patterns during rain events.
- **Building automation system training:** Ensure church staff understand how to operate the BAS, adjust scheduling, and respond to alarms. Request a training session from the installing contractor.
- **Elevator/lift initial service check:** Schedule the first service visit with your elevator maintenance provider. Confirm proper operation of all safety features. Train staff on emergency procedures including entrapment response and power failure protocols.
- **Document all warranty start dates:** Create a master list of all warranties with start dates, durations, and contact information. Some equipment warranties begin at installation, not occupancy.
- **Set up maintenance log/binder:** Establish a system for recording all maintenance activities, service visits, and building issues.

HCM TIP

Many equipment warranties start on the date of installation, not the date of occupancy. Verify the actual start date for each item, as some warranties may already be weeks or months into their coverage period by the time you move in.

3. Month 4–6: First Seasonal Transition

As the building experiences its first change of seasons, new performance characteristics will emerge. This is your opportunity to verify that the building performs well across different weather conditions.

Key Tasks

- **HVAC filter changes:** Replace all air filters on a quarterly basis at minimum. High-traffic church buildings may require more frequent changes, especially during pollen season or construction in adjacent areas.
- **Exterior caulking inspection:** Inspect all caulking around windows, doors, and building joints. Look for gaps, shrinkage, or adhesion failures. Address any issues promptly to prevent water infiltration.
- **Parking lot inspection:** Check for cracks, settlement, and drainage issues. Note any areas where water pools after rain events.
- **Elevator/lift quarterly maintenance:** Schedule the first quarterly maintenance service. In Ontario, this must comply with TSSA (Technical Standards and Safety Authority) requirements. Ensure the service report is documented.
- **Roof drain and gutter cleaning:** Clear all roof drains, scuppers, and gutters of debris. Blocked drainage is a leading cause of roof leaks and premature membrane failure.
- **Test emergency lighting and exit signs:** Verify that all emergency lights illuminate during a power interruption and that exit signs are clearly visible.
- **Check all door hardware and closers:** Adjust door closers as needed. Tighten loose hardware. Verify that all fire-rated doors latch and close properly.

4. Month 7–9: Mid-Year Review

At the mid-year point, you should conduct a thorough assessment of all major building systems and begin preparing for the critical warranty walkthrough period.

Key Tasks

- **Roof inspection:** Walk the roof (safely) or hire a professional. Look for ponding water, membrane blistering, flashing separations, and sealant failures.
- **Mechanical system review:** Schedule pre-season service for your boiler or chiller, depending on which season is approaching. Have the technician verify all set points and sequences.
- **Cleaning protocol assessment:** Evaluate your cleaning products and methods against manufacturer recommendations for specialty surfaces like polished concrete, vinyl tile, wood flooring, and natural stone.
- **Elevator/lift semi-annual inspection:** Conduct a thorough semi-annual inspection and TSSA compliance check. Review the elevator log book for any recurring issues.
- **Fire alarm system annual test:** Required by the Ontario Fire Code. Engage a licensed fire protection company to conduct a full test and inspection of all devices, panels, and notification appliances.
- **Backflow prevention device testing:** Required annually by most Ontario municipalities. Hire a certified tester.
- **Review energy bills vs. design targets:** Compare actual energy consumption to the design estimates. Significant discrepancies may indicate system issues or control programming errors.

HCMI TIP

Keep a simple spreadsheet tracking your monthly energy bills (gas and electricity). After 12 months, you will have a complete baseline that makes it easy to spot anomalies in future years. Sudden increases often indicate equipment problems that need attention.

5. Month 10–11: Pre-Warranty Expiry (CRITICAL)

This is the single most important maintenance period in your first two years. The standard construction warranty period is 12 months from substantial completion, and any deficiencies not documented before this deadline may become your financial responsibility.

Key Tasks

- **Comprehensive building walkthrough:** Conduct a thorough, room-by-room inspection of the entire building. Create a detailed punch list documenting every deficiency, no matter how minor.
- **11-month warranty walkthrough with contractor:** This is critical—do not miss it. Schedule a formal walkthrough with your general contractor at the 11-month mark to review all identified deficiencies.
- **Document every deficiency:** Cracks, paint imperfections, hardware issues, HVAC performance concerns, plumbing drips, squeaky floors, sticking doors—document everything with photos and descriptions.
- **Elevator/lift warranty review:** Conduct a full service inspection before the warranty period expires. Document any issues with door operation, leveling, ride quality, or noise.
- **Review all equipment warranties:** Some equipment has shorter warranty terms (one year or less). Verify each item and submit claims before deadlines.
- **Submit warranty claims:** Formally submit all deficiency lists and warranty claims in writing. Keep copies of all correspondence.

HCM TIP

We strongly recommend walking the building with your contractor at the 11-month mark. Once the 12-month warranty period expires, the contractor's obligation to correct deficiencies is significantly reduced. This walkthrough is your best opportunity to have issues resolved at no cost to the church. Bring your full punch list and insist on written acknowledgment of each item.

6. Month 12–24: Year Two

With the warranty period behind you, it is time to transition from a reactive punch-list mentality to a proactive annual maintenance calendar. Establish seasonal routines that will protect your building for decades.

Spring

- Exterior inspection: roof, caulking, parking lot, building envelope
- Parking lot seal-coat (do this now in year two—not in year one when the asphalt is still curing)
- Landscaping restart: pruning, mulching, irrigation system activation
- Spring HVAC changeover and filter replacement

Summer

- HVAC cooling season optimization and performance verification
- Interior painting touch-ups (especially high-traffic areas)
- Inspect and clean exterior signage and lighting

Fall

- Heating system pre-season service and startup
- Gutter cleaning and roof drain verification
- Winterization: exterior hose bibs, irrigation blowout, weather stripping check
- Caulking repairs before freeze/thaw season

Winter

- Snow and ice management plan execution
- Salt and de-icer damage monitoring (especially on concrete and carpet)
- Monitor interior humidity levels (protect wood finishes and musical instruments)

Year Two Annual Requirements

- **Elevator/lift annual certification:** Mandatory TSSA inspection and certification in Ontario. Schedule well in advance as inspectors have limited availability.
- **Fire alarm annual inspection:** Ontario Fire Code requirement. Full system test by licensed contractor.
- **Sprinkler system service:** Annual inspection and testing per NFPA 25.
- **Budget planning:** Begin developing your year 3+ maintenance budget based on actual experience from the first two years.

7. Elevator & Lift Maintenance

Most modern church buildings include at least one elevator or accessibility lift. These are complex mechanical and electrical systems subject to provincial regulation in Ontario. Proper maintenance is not optional—it is a legal requirement and essential for the safety of your congregation.

Ontario TSSA Requirements

The Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) regulates all elevating devices in Ontario. Your elevator or lift must be registered with TSSA, inspected periodically, and maintained by qualified technicians. Operating an unregistered or uninspected device is a serious violation that can result in fines and liability exposure.

Maintenance Schedule

- **Monthly checks:** Door operation and alignment, car leveling accuracy at each floor, emergency phone or communication device, interior lighting and ventilation, cleanliness of car and hoistway entrance.
- **Quarterly service:** Lubrication of all moving parts, safety device testing, controller and wiring inspection, door operator adjustments, ride quality assessment.
- **Semi-annual:** Comprehensive inspection of all mechanical and electrical components, fire service recall testing, emergency power operation verification.
- **Annual:** Full TSSA inspection, load testing if required, five-year and twenty-five-year code compliance testing as applicable.

Record Keeping

Ontario regulations require a dedicated elevator log book to be maintained on site. This log must contain records of all inspections, maintenance visits, repairs, and TSSA certificates. The log book must be available for review by a TSSA inspector at any time.

Emergency Procedures

All church staff should be trained in elevator emergency procedures, including:

- Entrapment response: how to communicate with trapped passengers and when to call for professional assistance (never attempt to force doors open)
- Power failure protocol: understanding emergency lighting and battery lowering operation
- Fire service recall: how the elevator responds during a fire alarm activation
- Reporting procedures for any malfunction or unusual operation

Budget Considerations

A typical annual elevator maintenance contract ranges from **\$3,000 to \$8,000** depending on the type of equipment (hydraulic vs. traction), number of stops, and level of service coverage. Full-service contracts that include parts and labour for routine maintenance are strongly recommended over basic oil-and-inspect agreements.

HCMi TIP

Negotiate a full-service maintenance contract with your elevator company from day one. This typically covers all parts and labour for routine maintenance and is far more cost-effective than calling for service on an as-needed basis. Ensure the contract includes TSSA inspection coordination and 24/7 emergency callback service.

8. Annual Maintenance Budget Guide

The following table provides typical annual maintenance cost ranges for a mid-sized church building (10,000–20,000 sq ft) in Ontario. Actual costs will vary based on building size, age, complexity, and local market conditions.

Category	Annual Cost Range
HVAC Maintenance	\$5,000 – \$15,000
Elevator / Lift Maintenance	\$3,000 – \$8,000
Roof Inspection & Maintenance	\$1,500 – \$3,000
Landscaping	\$5,000 – \$12,000
Snow Removal (Ontario)	\$3,000 – \$8,000
Fire / Life Safety Systems	\$2,000 – \$5,000
General Repairs & Supplies	\$5,000 – \$10,000
Cleaning Supplies & Equipment	\$3,000 – \$6,000
Parking Lot Maintenance	\$2,000 – \$5,000
Electrical / Lighting	\$1,000 – \$3,000
Plumbing	\$1,000 – \$3,000
Building Envelope (Caulking, Painting)	\$2,000 – \$5,000
Insurance	Varies
TOTAL RANGE	\$35,000 – \$85,000+

Rule of thumb: Budget 1–2% of your building’s replacement value annually for ongoing maintenance. Buildings with elevators, complex HVAC systems, or specialty finishes should budget toward the higher end of this range.

HCMI TIP

Track your actual maintenance spending carefully in the first two years. This real-world data will be far more accurate than industry averages for budgeting purposes. Many churches find that costs are front-loaded in years 1–3 as they establish service contracts and address initial punch-list items, then level out over time.

9. Maintenance Contact Log Template

Use the following template to maintain a current list of all maintenance contractors and service providers for your building. Keep this list updated and accessible to multiple staff members.

System / Equipment	Contractor / Vendor	Contact Name	Phone	Email	Contract Expiry	Notes
HVAC						
Elevator / Lift						
Fire Alarm / Sprinkler						
Roofing						
Plumbing						
Electrical						
Landscaping						
Snow Removal						
Cleaning						
General Contractor						
Locksmith / Security						
Pest Control						

We recommend reviewing and updating this contact list at least twice per year, typically in spring and fall when seasonal service contracts are being renewed or adjusted.

HCFI TIP

Store a digital copy of this contact list in your building maintenance binder and share it with your building committee, lead pastor, and office administrator. In an emergency, quick access to the right contractor can prevent minor issues from becoming costly disasters.