



LAST CHECK Trying to outwit Mother Nature has always been a difficult endeavor but acting quickly to inspect your building façade one last time before bad weather strikes can help save unnecessary aggravation and, more importantly, money.

Readying for Winter

Prepare for the coming season with a building façade checkup

By Michael Petrasek

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It's that time of year again when the weather is quickly turning for the worse and snow will be upon us. With that thought in mind, building owners and facilities managers who thought good weather would last a little longer should consider a quick checkup on their exterior building façades.

Trying to outwit Mother Nature has always been a difficult endeavor but acting quickly to inspect your building façade one last time before bad weather strikes can help save unnecessary aggravation and, more importantly, money.

Here are a few items to have your building maintenance team or building restoration contractor check to ensure your façade is winterized.

Sealants

Check window perimeter sealants for failed caulk joints, which can allow water infiltration into the building. Included in

that sealant check list should be any penetration that has been caulked, such as air conditioner perimeters, vents, louvers, control joints in masonry or precast to name a few. A thorough inspection of these conditions can mean the difference between keeping tenants warm and dry versus cold, drafty and wet.

Caulking and sealants help to maintain the integrity and water tightness of building components. Moisture intrusion is a leading cause of building exterior component failures including spalling, cracking and delaminating façades. Interior components such as drywall, flooring and even ceilings are often damaged due

to water infiltration and lack of proper caulking maintenance.

Masonry façades

Contrary to popular belief, brick and stone buildings – while long lasting – do require periodic maintenance to ensure longevity and water tightness. Cracks in masonry, stone and mortar joints can lead to similar problems associated with failed sealants and should be inspected before the weather turns cold. Mortar repairs are typically very difficult to complete once temperatures get too low as mortars can freeze. Take a cursory look at the building envelope to verify

you see no bad mortar joints and try to repair them if time will allow.

Parapet walls & roof caps

Parapet walls and roof caps are a leading source of water infiltration within a building and can cause a myriad of problems. Once the snow flies, it is difficult at best to correct these conditions. Check the roof termination sealants, metal or stone cap conditions and the general condition of the parapet to see if there are any possible sources of water infiltration. If water does penetrate these conditions, it will freeze and can cause spalling, interior damage and damage to surrounding building components and roof conditions.

Façade waterproofing

Façade walls and structures susceptible to water damage, including brick, split face block, stone, precast concrete and cast-in-place concrete, should be

inspected before winter. These types of structures can all benefit from the application of waterproof coatings and repellents. These types of products increase the life expectancy of building components by preventing moisture intrusion, freeze-thaw cycle damage and costly façade deterioration. Waterproof coatings are a cost effective means of

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protecting your structure and can also dramatically improve the appearance of a building.

General façade inspection

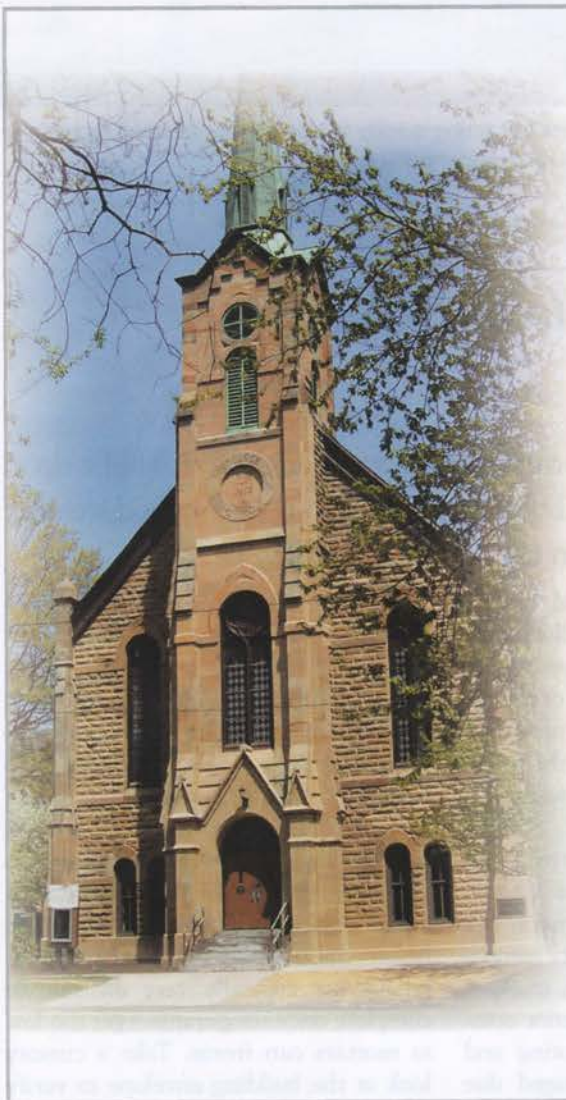
Regardless of the type of building you may be in charge of, a common

sense approach to viewing the exterior façade before winter can help residents, tenants, owners and managers. View all aspects of the building envelope where you feel water intrusion can cause a problem.

As there are many building façade components, each is built with the idea of preventing water intrusion, yet can fail over time with neglect. Take a moment to review your facility and take corrective action if necessary. Develop a plan to make periodic inspections so you become proactive rather than reactive to detrimental façade problems.

By incorporating a simple visual inspection program you can keep your feet up by the fireplace this winter without concern. **P**

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