



# Building envelope maintenance: protecting the value of your real estate investment

By Randy L. Browne, PCM  
Pomeroy Construction &  
Maintenance

***In recent years, real estate values have increased significantly. For building owners, a properly implemented maintenance program is a cost-effective method of protecting the value of their real estate investment. The "building envelope" is a significant part of the building and its performance can be maximized through proper maintenance.***

"Building envelope" refers to those parts of the building which separate the interior environment from the exterior environment, including windows, doors, walls, roofs and foundation walls, sometimes referred to as "building enclosure" or "environmental separator" in building codes.

The building envelope protects the structure and the interior components from the effects of the external environment. We all know cuts and bruises that don't heal quickly can result in infections that require medical attention and treatment. A similar analogy applies to buildings. If the deficiencies and defects in the building envelope are not repaired

promptly, more serious deterioration of the underlying components, including structural elements may occur.

The exterior of the building is exposed to the climatic elements such as water, ice, snow, wind and sun. Building materials expand and contract to varying degrees with changes in temperature. Due to those thermal movements, various defects such as cracks or de-lamination of various components can occur. Depending on the age of the building, the design details, and building exposure, the aging process for each exterior component will occur at a different rate.

In addition to the exterior loads, the building envelope is impacted by the systems inside the building and by the activities of its occupants. The internal systems include heating, cooling, ventilation, plumbing and electrical systems. One of the crucial maintenance items that should be monitored by the owners is the interior relative humidity (RH).

## **Tuning up your building**

Building maintenance is somewhat like automobile maintenance. Most car owners are aware of the importance to maintain their cars. We take the car for regular check-ups, tune-ups and car washes to assure its good performance and appearance.

Maintenance of building envelope components and their interfaces is crucial to preventing moisture ingress into building assemblies and reducing costly repairs. Moisture trapped inside the building assemblies may cause their components to deteriorate prematurely and cause even more issues for the

homeowner. Awareness of premature building envelope failure has increased, thanks to the leaky condo crisis. Apartment owners need to be pro active and address building envelope deficiencies in a timely manner in order to avoid costly repairs.

Although recent improvements in materials and building envelope technologies such as the incorporation of a "rainscreen" wall assembly have assisted in decreasing the likelihood of water ingress, no building is maintenance free. All building envelopes require maintenance, regardless of their age, design, or the materials used in order to realize their intended service life.

No matter what upkeep has been done in the past, a maintenance plan is necessary to ensure that the building envelope continues to perform its intended function. PCM Pomeroy Construction and Maintenance brings a building up to a maintainable standard and then provides an ongoing system of checks. Maintenance is prioritized at PCM with safety taking precedence, then damage, potential wear, and finally cosmetic appearance. Expenditures are outlined over a 20 year period so there are no surprises for the owner. The PCM Building Envelope Maintenance Program is acknowledged by insurance underwriters and strata corporations as a valuable tool for mitigating risk. The program identifies potential problems before they become costly repairs.

An apartment building is a major investment and it should be protected by a comprehensive maintenance

instructions that damaged bathtubs must be replaced when retiling enclosures since it would cost you a lot more to do this at a later time.

- Eliminate the need to re-invent the wheel every time there is a vacant suite, so make a list of materials that are readily available and that can be used in your building: name of countertop laminates, size and colour of ceramic tiles, flooring finishes, etc.
- Last but not least, plan to keep the flame burning with a renovation contractor who has proven to be capable of providing consistent quality, consistent response times and consistent pricing. Ask your contractor for ideas and set prices that apply to your building; you can use these estimates for future budgeting. Keep the honeymoon going with your loyalty and remember what we have said before: no matter what the economy is doing, contractors need good customers, just as you need good contractors.

*Manuel Pereda is the General Manager of Aquataur Services Ltd. Geraldine Herron works with Manuel and is responsible for scheduling and dispatching a crew of fifteen tradesmen. Aquataur is a BCAOMA associate member specializing in rental apartment renovation work within the Lower Mainland. Aquataur also responds to small repair service jobs and offers special discounts to BCAOMA members. ☐*

*continued from page 10*

plan. A pro active approach is essential to ensure that your building envelope continues to perform well and provides lasting value for your investment.

#### **VIP reward**

PCM Pomeroy Construction & Maintenance offers BCAOMA member pricing on maintenance programs and construction repairs.

*For more information, contact Randy at 604. 294-6700, ext.2 or rbrowne@pomeroyconstruction.com. ☐*

# Suite inspections

*By Veronika Metchie, Crime Free Coordinator, New Westminster*

## **When was the last time you inspected all the suites in your building?**

As the Crime Free Coordinator for New Westminster I regularly attend with other city officials inspections of properties which may be violating the Business Regulations and Licensing (Rental Units) Bylaw. The inspectors look for maintenance deficiencies such as leaky faucets, broken tiles around tubs, appliances not working properly, and health and fire risks. On occasion, there are units where the residents' habits are encouraging deficiencies. The residents may be long-term and experiencing mental health or aging changes and unable to maintain their units properly. Long-term tenants quite often do not alert management to things not working in their suite. A small problem can escalate into a much bigger issue.

The Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) allows monthly suite inspections upon proper notice. A good practice for established tenants is to inspect suites at least every six months, more often for newer tenants. Look in areas that may cause significant damage to the building such as under kitchen sinks and around tubs and toilets for leaks. Ensure locks on windows and patio doors are functioning properly and that the smoke alarms are connected as residents often disconnect them. Regular suite inspections also protect against marijuana grow-operations.

Also take note of the tenant's personal housekeeping habits. Excessive articles such as clothing, furniture and newspapers can violate the fire code. Food and garbage not stored

properly can promote rodents and insects. It is management's right to insist that tenants keep their units at an acceptable level that will not be a hazard to others in the building. In addition, if you allow pets, you should also ensure they are properly cared for and not creating damage to the suite.

A recent city inspection of a building turned up the following:

- The tenants had disconnected the smoke alarms in 25 per cent of suites.
- A suite with an elderly, long-time tenant was overwhelmed by cat urine, suffered significant wear and tear on the walls and carpets, and heavy soiling of the stove (making it a fire hazard).
- Three suites were over-filled with the tenants' possessions and deemed a hazard by the fire department.
- Many dripping taps and tiles around tubs allowed water to penetrate the floors and walls, promoting mould growth.

While the outside of the property looked well kept, the condition of the suites was causing significant damage to the interior of building and putting other residents at risk.

With a proactive approach in maintenance inspections, you avoid bigger problems, protect your investment and minimize turn-over and down-time for suites.

*Veronika Metchie is the CFMH Program Coordinator for New Westminster and can be reached at 604.529.2494 or vmetchie@nwpolice.org. ☐*