

# Hawks & Company **Zone In**

Information for Managers of HVAC Systems

Vol. 1 Issue 1

## **Scheduled Maintenance**

### An Ounce of Prevention Now is Worth a Pound of Performance All Year Long

**E**very business should have a line item in its annual budget for regular periodic maintenance of its HVAC equipment. Why is it important? What would happen if we did not perform, or even reduced, the amount of scheduled maintenance?

The easy answer is that periodic maintenance is the least expensive way to maintain your HVAC equipment. Regularly scheduled maintenance, performed by a properly trained service technician, provides many benefits.

- Coil cleaning helps maintain the required heat transferability of the system. This enables the compressors, fan motors and valves to work at their highest efficiency.
- Quarterly filter changes help keep the indoor coil surfaces clean, maintaining efficiency and prolonging the life of the unit. Annual blower belt changes reduce the probability of nuisance service calls and unnecessary downtime.

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## **Message from the President**

I would like to welcome you to our first edition of *Zone In*. It is my attempt to deliver you the latest news in the HVAC industry that benefits commercial building owners and managers in our region. Back in the '80s and '90s, Hawks & Company was known for traditional HVAC service and related energy retrofit projects. Since 2006 Hawks & Company has worked very hard to establish a different identity in the greater Philadelphia area. In addition to energy conservation, we also focus on performing more maintenance agreements and performing preventive maintenance on a scheduled basis to commercial and industrial facilities in the region. As you will read in this edition, preventive maintenance is an important aspect of a facility's operations. Please view our website ([www.hawksandco.com](http://www.hawksandco.com)) to share perspective from our clients — building owners and managers like you — who have benefited from our unique preventive maintenance programs.



Marty Rosica  
President, Hawks & Company

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# Discussion Zone

**Q:** I recently purchased new HVAC units for my building. Why should I pay for a maintenance agreement before the warranty is up?

*Joe M., Shelby Township*

**A:** Your new HVAC units are complicated pieces of machinery. Your equipment needs periodic adjustments and maintenance, regardless of its age. Safety and operating controls must be checked to make sure they are working properly. Coils need to be cleaned to maximize heat transfer and reduce the load on system components such as compressors and fan motors. Filters need to be changed every three months. Other required or recommended maintenance tasks may be found in the operation and maintenance manual included with your equipment. Your warranty may be void if you cannot document that the manufacturer's recommended maintenance procedures were followed. The bottom line is your investment in scheduled maintenance will pay for itself and produce a large return on that investment in terms of risk mitigation and asset protection. The bulk of the return comes from increasing the useful life of the equipment. Proper maintenance adds years to its life, avoiding the extremely expensive capital outlay to replace it. The longer the capital expense can be delayed, the higher the return.



**Q:** Why should I maintain an HVAC unit? Isn't it cheaper to just replace parts when they fail?

*Jeff W., Romulus*

**A:** Statistics can be manipulated to favor an answer for or against maintenance. Here is what we know: Over time, dirt accumulates on heat transfer surfaces (coils) which accelerates corrosion and reduces efficiency. In many cases, that same dirt can contribute to health issues (allergies and mold-related diseases). As efficiency degrades, the energy cost to operate your system increases and so does the rate of wear on components like motors and compressors. Over the life of the unit this means more component failures. It also means the life of the unit will be reduced. As the owner of a building with HVAC equipment, my personal goal is to extend the time to repair or replace that equipment as long as possible. That is exactly what regular maintenance is doing for me.



This newsletter is published exclusively for building owners and managers to share best practices and innovations in HVAC maintenance and operations. **Zone In** is published quarterly by Hawks & Company. Please send questions, comments, or suggestions to [Zoneln@hawksandco.com](mailto:Zoneln@hawksandco.com).

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*We invite readers to submit their questions concerning maintenance and operations of mechanical systems. Questions will be answered by technical experts and published in future issues of **Zone In**. Submit your queries to [Zoneln@hawksandco.com](mailto:Zoneln@hawksandco.com).*

# Scheduled Maintenance:

(Continued from Cover)

- Scheduled inspections of the safety and operating controls and electrical components ensure your equipment is functioning according to the manufacturer specifications. Finding irregularities before they cause a major system failure saves you time and money and keeps the building occupants happy and comfortable.

Proper maintenance will reduce the number of annual service calls on your HVAC equipment. It will also result in fewer system failures and a longer life for the equipment, avoiding expensive capital outlay to replace it. Your investment in regular maintenance will pay for itself and produce a large return in terms of risk mitigation and asset protection. Ultimately, the preponderance of the return comes from increasing the useful life of the equipment: the longer the capital expense can be delayed, the higher the return.

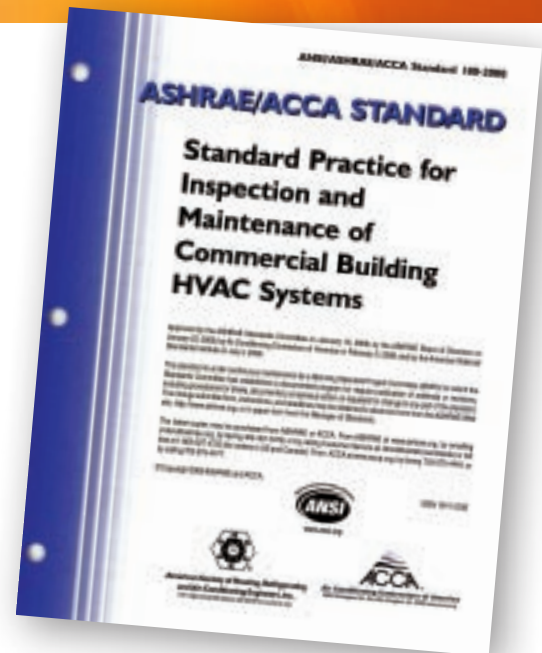
HVAC maintenance also delivers a number of benefits that may not be easily measured on a balance sheet.

With equipment running at peak performance and the number of service calls minimized, building owners and managers will realize increased occupant comfort, tenant retention, and, hopefully, greater peace of mind knowing the mechanical systems are well maintained.

A regional Vice President of Facilities for a Class A real estate firm stated, "We have seen the number of service calls drop by 60% and our tenants are happier with a constant comfort level." Another regional executive who manages multiple senior living facilities added, "When we instituted preventive maintenance practices, we saved over \$70,000 annually in service calls at just one of our facilities."

What is the best way to accomplish this important function? What guidelines should your HVAC service provider be using? What key performance indicators should every commercial building owner be using?

Organizations such as the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) developed guidelines for standard practices for inspection and maintenance services in commercial buildings. These standard practices provide building owners and managers with benchmarks for implementing a comprehensive routine maintenance program. They offer a



**"...we saved over \$70,000 annually in service calls at just one of our facilities."**

knowledgeable, external validation of the steps you and your service provider should be taking in developing your maintenance program.

Think of routine maintenance as an iceberg: ten percent of an iceberg is above the water line, and ninety percent is submerged, invisible to the eye. You can't see the part below the surface, but it nonetheless makes a world of difference if you are navigating the North Atlantic. Routine maintenance is similar: you can't see it, but it makes a huge difference when performed correctly. So, in these stormy economic seas, chart a new course by partnering with a knowledgeable service provider to craft a successful maintenance program for your HVAC systems.

For information on industry guidelines for commercial maintenance programs email [Zoneln@hawksandco.com](mailto:Zoneln@hawksandco.com).



*A stacked, or double, condenser coil on a packaged rooftop unit. In the above photo, the owner believed his maintenance people were cleaning the coil properly because only the **outer coil** was visible. And it was spotless! When our technician searched for the cause of high head pressures, he found the **inner coil** plugged solid with years of dirt. Photo at right shows the inner coil after our technician thoroughly cleaned it.*



## Project Spotlight

# United Methodist Homes of New Jersey



Driving past a local senior living facility in South Jersey, I noticed an excess of heat being wasted from their cooling tower on the roof. The boilers for the system were not sequenced correctly which was apparent during the operation of the cooling tower. This is a common problem with water source heat pump buildings.

Our service group approached the facility owner, United Methodist Homes of New Jersey, about the problem we observed earlier from the street. Interestingly, the problem had not been identified by the incumbent

service provider, and, as a result of our proactive problem-solving approach, Hawks & Company secured the preventive maintenance agreement with the facility. The previous service contractor had not offered a preventive maintenance program. Instead, they focused on reaping the benefits of service billing at their street rate.

After three months with the Hawks & Company preventive maintenance program, the facilities director calculated a reduction in service calls by over 75%. In less than one year the number of total service calls was down by more than 80%.

In addition to the preventive maintenance program, Hawks & Company's service technicians identified several energy-saving opportunities related to the mechanical systems. They installed a DDC system to optimize the buildings' boilers and cooling towers and a new high efficiency domestic hot water system as part of the total solution.

"The energy projects will not only pay for themselves in less than three years, they will also pay for the maintenance agreement throughout the life of the equipment," says Harry Schneider, Vice President of Projects for the United Methodist Homes of New Jersey.



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