



Everyday Environmental Stewardship

HVAC Maintenance Contract

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Key issue:

Poor maintenance/inefficient operations
System failure at inopportune times

Stewardship Opportunity

Maintenance Contract

Keeping heating and cooling equipment in good condition is essential to maintaining their long life and efficient use. Regular maintenance ensures that the HVAC systems will stay in good condition and run reliably. AC failure during Yom Kippur or heating failure at the Christmas Eve midnight service is just no fun. Maintenance contracts are particularly important for houses of worship with old (5+ years) HVAC systems. Contracts free congregations to focus on stoking other flames of faith!

Many New England houses of worship have old, steam heating systems. For reasons of both age and intrinsic nature, these systems are at the greatest risk of breaking down. The steam process (including introduction of “make-up water” which is often heavily oxygenated and contains other contaminants) continually corrodes the pipes. The resulting “rusty” mixture deposits into the boiler. Eventually the boiler breaks down. Another problem on any oil-fired boiler (steam or hot water) is the build-up of soot on inner walls, keeping the heat from reaching the water to create steam or hot water. (1/4” of soot is the equivalent of 12” of fiberglass insulation.) The sad fact is this: Old boilers without regular maintenance can and will break down when the house of worship requires heavy use.

A volunteer or staff person can perform some maintenance on heating systems, “blowing-down” a steam system, for example. However, there are two problems with this approach: 1) the person may either forget or not have enough time to perform regular maintenance and 2) the person may not have the necessary skills to see if the system actually needs maintenance. Under a maintenance contract, the HVAC professional will make regular scheduled visits and can spot problems. The HVAC professional can then fix most problems on site immediately. The proverb applies: An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.

Since HVAC professionals deal with systems every day, they know how long boiler and AC parts can last and what parts of the system need to be checked, and when. Most importantly, a HVAC professional will learn your system. Think of going to the doctor. People generally go to the doctor once a year to make sure they’re healthy and develop good health habits, instead of going only for a medical emergency. Thus the doctor has a record of physical factors and health history. The older one gets, the more risk of health complications there are. Regular checkups and timely health interventions keep one health and happy. The same is true for your HVAC system.

For a maintenance contract template, go to...

http://www.mipandl.org/congregation_energy.htm