

The ultimate roofing playbook for building owners



QXO

Table of contents

Introduction	03
Roof maintenance and repairs: Whose job is it?	04
What roofs need	06
• Inspections	
• Maintenance	
• Reroofs	
Foot traffic	09
Location, location, location	11
• Local climate	
• Local regulations	
Maintenance and inspections: Contract or DIY?	12
Rapid response plans	14
• Roofing partners	
• Insurance partners	
Working with the right professionals	16
Taking a proactive approach	17



A roof may be the most important building system that no one notices. Nobody buys or leases a commercial building solely because the roof is in good condition. When a roof does its job, most people never give it a second thought. But if that roof were to fail, the owners and tenants of that building could face catastrophic losses, lawsuits and long-term headaches.

Whether you're a property owner or building manager, there are a few things you need to know about the space over your head if you want to ensure it continues to protect the occupants and materials inside your commercial property.

In this ebook, we'll help you understand your roofing needs and navigate regional and climate-related considerations, so you can make informed decisions about materials, maintenance and repairs. We'll also discuss how to find and retain top-tier roofing contractors to ensure any issues are dealt with quickly and efficiently. After all, when it comes to roofs, delays can cause disasters.



Roof maintenance and repair: Whose job is it?

Depending on the specific building and the way the ownership/tenant lease is structured, one party may have a more direct responsibility for roof maintenance or capital expenditures. But even without seeing the paperwork, we can tell you exactly whose job it is to make sure the roof is cared for: you.

If you're the building occupant, it's your stuff that will take the brunt of water damage from any roof leaks. Who cares if the property owner is responsible for maintenance when you're the one looking at potentially tens of thousands of dollars of lost inventory?

If you're the building manager, any roof damage or repairs happen on your watch. Both the building tenants and owners will expect you to be on top of your game, managing reroofs and repairs as needed. If there's damage due to neglect, you can bet you'll be the one people look to for answers.

If you're the building owner, it's your structure. A leaking roof can lead to extensive structural damage. Even if you have a triple net lease where the tenants are fully responsible for building maintenance, you'll be the one with a devalued property if a roof is neglected and allowed to deteriorate.

The truth is everyone who uses, manages or owns a large building benefits when the roof stays whole and healthy.

What roofs need



There's no secret sauce here, just a simple list of three ingredients to keep a roof in good health: inspections, maintenance and reroofs.



Inspections

Sure, technically, you don't need inspections. After all, you'll find out the roof has a problem when it starts leaking. But the trouble is, if that leak shows up in a server room or other sensitive area, it might do tremendous damage. Avoid an expensive headache by [scheduling regular inspections](#) to identify potential trouble before it becomes an issue.

Inspections are best performed hands-on, with the inspector either walking the roof or getting up to its level (particularly steep or complex rooflines may require a drone inspection). If that's not possible, a ground-based

inspection with binoculars can still identify issues with gutters, flashing, mildew or debris.

A roofing professional brings the advantage of having years of experience spotting issues and nipping them in the bud. But even an untrained eye can pick up potential problem areas. You may need to bring in an expert on occasion to verify potential problems, but it's far better to at least look with untrained eyes than to ignore the roof completely.



Maintenance

Roofs take a lot of abuse from Mother Nature. Between the beating sun, fierce winter weather, [torrential rain and hail](#), it's easy to see how a roof can be damaged — and that's just the bare minimum. Add in fallen tree limbs, animal activity and human activity, and you can see why even the best roof requires occasional maintenance.

Preventative maintenance involves maintaining the integrity and structure of the roof to avoid any damage. It's how small issues, like leaks, can lead to major structural and financial damage. Repairs involve addressing existing damage before it becomes an issue. Repairs can be made with in-house technicians or contracted out to a roofing company.

Many building owners and managers prefer to hire a roofing company to perform scheduled inspections and maintenance visits. The roofer will inspect the property and make minor repairs up to an agreed-upon price point. The advantage here is that inspections and maintenance will be done by professionals and can largely run as an automated system.



Reroofs

While inspections and maintenance can extend a roof's life, all roofs eventually need to be replaced. Depending on the roof material and the conditions in your area, a given [roof's lifespan](#) can be anywhere from decades to a full century.

Reroofing is a large project that can create a hassle for tenants and managers and become a significant expense for property owners. When you do put on a new roof, select durable, long-lasting materials and a qualified roofer to oversee the job. This investment can help save money in the long run by reducing maintenance costs and protecting your property. After a reroof, many roofers will offer inspection or maintenance contracts at a discounted rate, too.

Foot traffic



Many commercial and large residential buildings have an issue that smaller buildings rarely have to worry about: foot traffic. Large buildings tend to store HVAC systems or other mechanical equipment on the roof. Technicians need to access this equipment for service, and that calls for special attention to everything from access points to fall protection.

Durability

Not all roof material is designed to withstand regular foot traffic. If you know you're going to have recurring foot traffic on a roof, it's in your best interest to ensure you use thicker, harder materials that can withstand additional wear and tear.

Fall protection

Depending on the type and location of the roof access points, there may be specific OSHA regulations about safety requirements for entry points and the surrounding areas. It's best to be proactive on this issue. You don't want to be forced into a retroactive upgrade after an inspection or, even worse, after an accident.

Work areas

The areas around mechanical systems can benefit from extra attention. Mechanical systems will almost always have penetrations through the roof that should be closely examined during regular inspections. Since they'll see the most foot traffic with workers and their accompanying tool bags coming and going, it's a good idea to pay particular attention to the durability and safety of the roofing in these areas.

Unwelcome guests

Stairway roof access makes life easier for inspections and mechanical service, but they also provide easy access for unauthorized visitors. As such, make sure to secure your roof access, install warning signage and lay out penalties for unauthorized access.

Location, location, location

The mantra for real estate holds true for individual building maintenance, as well. There are two major considerations for location when it comes to maintenance and repair: local climate and local regulations.



Local climate

Sometimes, it's clear how local weather can impact a roof. Alaskans need to be aware of snow weight, for example, while [Floridians](#) need to be aware of hurricane risks. However, buildings can also be affected by more subtle factors, like nearby structures and natural features.

Is your roof primarily facing south, soaking in solar exposure? Is it surrounded by taller buildings and large shade trees, protecting it from UV rays at the price of dampness and mildew growth? Factors like these can impact the condition of your roof, which is why you should take your building's local climate into account when selecting materials to reduce long-term maintenance and replacement needs.



Local regulations

Building codes vary by location, and your property may have requirements specific to your local building authority. It's always helpful to be familiar with your local requirements, and any contractors hired to maintain the roof should know them inside and out.

Maintenance and inspections: Contract or DIY?

We've touched a little on maintenance and inspections, but they deserve a deeper dive. Specifically, it's important to give some consideration to whether you want to keep your inspections and maintenance in-house or hire a professional contractor. There are three options when assigning this work: entirely in-house, entirely outsourced, or a mix of the two.

Keeping both inspections and maintenance in-house requires having someone on staff who has decent roofing skills. Even though maintenance repairs tend to be on a smaller scale, it's important they're done right. Poorly performed maintenance can make an ongoing issue appear to be resolved, leading to much larger problems down the road. Additionally, keep in mind the design of your roof and whether your staff has the training and equipment to conduct inspections and maintenance safely. A flat roof accessible by a staircase is very different from a steeply sloped slate roof that's only accessible by ladder.

Keeping inspections in-house while contracting maintenance work. If the building has a maintenance chief, then it's not unusual for a regular roof inspection to fall under their job duties. Should the maintenance chief find anything off about the roof, they can simply contact a roofing contractor to come out and make repairs as needed.

Contracting both inspections and maintenance moves the entirety of roof maintenance onto a [hired roofing company](#). Many roofers offer commercial clients a subscription-based service, which can effectively put the whole process on autopilot. If you opt for this path, be sure to request an affirmative all-clear after each inspection rather than a "no news is good news" policy. You don't want a missed email to result in neglected repairs.

Rapid response plans



Sometimes, repairs can't wait for a pre-planned maintenance schedule. There may be a sudden leak, a severe storm or a fallen tree limb that needs to be addressed immediately. The trick to [responding to emergencies](#) without panicking is to have a plan in place beforehand and access to two types of reliable partners: trusted roofers and insurers.



Roofing partners

Having an existing maintenance contract with a roofing company helps when emergencies strike. Since you already have a good working relationship with the company, you can typically mobilize them faster.

Speed is of the essence — a timely response to emergencies leads to faster recovery and fewer hassles with insurance claims. Even if a company isn't able to make an immediate repair, they should at least be able to stabilize the roof with tarps or other temporary roofing, preventing further water infiltration while a more permanent repair is arranged.



Insurance partners

Unlike standard maintenance, emergency roof repairs are often significant enough to warrant an insurance claim. Many roofing contractors are used to dealing with insurance companies and claims adjusters, and they can guide you through the claims process. If you have a strong relationship with your insurance agent, they may be a great first step to begin the process, and they may have contractors to recommend.

Lay the groundwork with your insurer well before any emergency occurs. Ask about the best way to document and file claims after storm damage, and confirm the procedure for emergency repairs with your roofing contractor. If the insurer requires photos of the damage with no emergency roofing in place, make sure your contractor knows that step is required.

Working with the right professionals



The single best way to minimize the headaches of roof repairs is to find a [reputable roofer](#) and cultivate a long-term relationship with them. Consider starting a maintenance plan to establish yourself as a reliable customer, and ask them about their policies for emergency repairs and insurance claims. If you have a plan in advance, those late-night emergencies will be a minor hassle instead of an expensive and stressful nightmare.

When you're ready to find a great roofer, there's no better, more reliable way to find one than through a personal referral. If you know another property owner who's gone through an emergency roof repair, reach out and ask if they recommend their roofer. Similarly, your insurance agent may have a list of roofers they've worked with in the past and can recommend. And don't forget to check in with [your local QXO store](#) — roofing vendors see roofing companies come and go, and they get to know the very best in the business.

Taking a proactive approach

Whether you're a building owner, tenant or property manager, you deserve to have a high-quality roof over your head. You also deserve to be provided with the knowledge and tools needed to protect your investment and work confidently with roofing professionals.

Get ahead of roofing issues by [preparing in advance](#) for the inevitable wear and tear that every roof faces. Remember that regular inspections minimize maintenance, and regular maintenance extends the life of a roof. Whether you decide to keep the work in-house or hire professional roofers, the important thing is that you take a proactive approach to maintaining the integrity of your roofing system. That, combined with having a clear plan for dealing with emergencies, will go a long way toward reducing stress and minimizing headaches.

To get started, [contact your local QXO store](#) and talk to an industry expert. They can help with selecting roof materials that balance durability, energy efficiency and value. They can also help you find reputable roofers in your area, so you'll be prepared for anything that Mother Nature (or human activity) might throw at your roof.

Learn more at: www.qxo.com

