

Home owner? Building Maintenance is Your Responsibility!

Should you own a house, flat or any part of a domestic building, Dundee City Council are eager to make you aware that public safety is an important issue and want to increase your knowledge in regard to your responsibilities as a property owner.

Inspection of your property on a regular basis, and maintenance where and when required, is extremely important as you are legally responsible for any accidents caused by defects in your building. This could incur serious financial penalties on your part but also cause severe harm to other members of the public.

The Council has a responsibility to deal with buildings that are in a dangerous condition, and if necessary to ensure that these buildings are vacated by the occupants. In addition, the Council has powers to take direct action to make buildings safe if the owners are unable to arrange for work to be carried out, with the costs being legally recoverable!

The tables below give information on life spans of some building elements and also the types of maintenance that should be carried out on your property.

BUILDING COMPONENT	AVG. LIFE EXPECTANCY
Wall/chimney rendering	15-20 years
Felt roof covering	15-20 years
Plastic guttering and downpipes	20-30 years
External Timber	25-30 years
Cast Iron or steel railings	30-50 years
Sandstone walls and chimneys	Repair required 40 years+
Roof tiles	45-55 years
Cast iron gutters and rainwater pipes	45-60 years
Lead Flashing	50-70 years
Roof Slates	55-60 years

“Life Expectancy of Building Components – Surveyors’ Experiences of Buildings in Use”

BUILDING MAINTENANCE	How often should you check and/or repair elements of your property?
Cleansing/clearing Guttering	Biannually
Tiled/Slated roof	Check Annually
Flat roof	Check Annually
Flashings	Check Annually
Render coatings	Check Annually, replace after 15 years+
Chimney pots	Check Annually
TV aerials	Check Annually
Door entry systems	Check/replace Every 3-5 years
External paintwork (doors, windows, gutters, sills etc.)	Recoat every 3-5 years
Mastic around windows	Check/replace every 5-10 years
Steps painting	Recoat Every 2-3 years
Pointing (mortar joints)	Check every 10 years, replace after 25

This is a general guide only based on regularly maintained buildings. You should get a survey carried out at least every 5 years to establish the actual condition.

Responsible Owners and Maintenance of your property value.

- You are wholly responsible for repairs and maintenance to your property, you will be in jointly responsible with other owners if you live in flatted accommodation**

Your exact responsibilities are set out in your Title Deeds and under the Occupiers Liability Act (Scotland) 1960. Should you have any queries regarding this please see the link below, another option is to visit your solicitor.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/privateowners/Looking>

- Shared buildings – Communication is key!**

Talking to your fellow owners regarding responsibility of any common items and individual items before damaged is caused can make you aware of where you stand in relation to any repair works. Some residents may also have useful skills or contacts that you can use during any repairs.

Neighbours

Setting up an Owners' Association would be a good idea, as is the appointment of a factor to organise maintenance. There may however be a cost for a factor.

Regular Building checks

Ideally you should get a building condition survey carried out every five years by an experienced professional such as an architect or surveyor. You should at least carry out a quick survey yourself in order to make yourself aware of any possible hazards to yourself or others. If you are unsure about anything regarding the state of your building you should see a property specialist. Routine repairs will ensure buildings retain their value.

List previous repairs

If you have been in residence at a property for a while you should know what repairs and been carried out on the building and may even have a record somewhere. If you do it is always good information to keep as you may need it for future works or to hand to new owners should you decide to sell up.

Check out the typical length of life of common building parts

Please see table above.

Maintenance planning

By doing this type of planning, using the tables above, you will be able to know when each building components life span is coming to an end or is likely to need repair/replacement. You may also be able to save money for when the unfortunate time appears.

Payment for repairs

There is a possibility that you may be able to claim against your insurances, depending on the circumstances of the damage. You will however need to look into the small print of your policy. Should you live in shared accommodation you might consider setting up a common fund for common problems that arise, each owner pays into the fund and guarantees that if they sell the new owner will take on responsibility for payment.

Plan for future repairs or maintenance

It is a good idea that you prepare for building maintenance and future repairs because all parts of buildings decay over time. Failing to do so could lead to unwanted and extensive repair bills and also reduced property values.