



## Walk Around Your Building

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We recommend monthly building inspections – in fact, we’re so gung-ho that we send clients monthly reminders to do them. Why? For the same reason you check more than just oil levels when you change the oil in your vehicles. It’s simple preventive maintenance. What should you look for?

Start with your exit lights and emergency lighting. Find and press the test button, to test if the unit’s battery is still good (a broom handle can be useful for this). How are the lights aimed? Will they light up the way to the exit?

Look at your exits. Can people get to them without feeling like rats in a maze? And can they get out? It’s winter – is there a clear path out the door and away from the building, or is the door blocked by snow? The exit should be able to be opened with one motion, so no one has to fumble with turning a deadbolt or finding a key.

Can you readily get to each of your fire extinguishers? That’s a common problem in shops, where equipment and parts move around and wall space is at a premium. Make sure they’re easy to find and fully charged. They should have lightweight tamper seals on them, to show that they haven’t been used. We’ve seen the tamper seals replaced with cable ties, which won’t pull off when needed. We’ve also seen partially used fire extinguishers hung back up – a bad idea, as you won’t have a full extinguisher when you need it next.

Check any auto-reverse on your garage doors. Do the doors have pressure strips on the bottom? Make sure that hasn’t torn away. If you have electric eyes, what happens when you block the beam?

How are you storing compressed gases? They need to be chained. Any not in use should have safety caps in place. Don’t store them under the stairs to your mezzanine or right by an exit, as you don’t need the kind of excitement they’d create in a fire. And if you have a spare cylinder of oxygen, keep it far away from anything that catches fire easily (acetylene, flammable liquids, oils).

Look at your vehicle hoists and your jacks. Do they work smoothly? Are they labeled with their capacity?

Are you lifting engines? Do you have a frame rack? Your cranes and hoists need to be in good shape, as do any chains or slings used with them. Frame rack slings take a beating; we see a lot that should have been thrown away years ago.

You should have an eyewash station. Is it clean and accessible? If it’s plumbed in, run it for a few minutes to ensure the water runs clean. If it’s the type that needs to be filled up, don’t run it,



but make sure that it has been flushed and refilled routinely (most eyewash preservatives require replacing after 90 days).

Is your first aid kit adequately stocked? We don't want to see any bulk containers, as it's too easy for those to become contaminated. Check the expiration dates on ointments and eye flushing solutions.

Take a look at your paint booths and prep stations. Are the sprinkler heads covered with flimsy paper bags, to protect them from overspray? Cellophane bags can be used, too. The bags are supposed to come off when the sprinkler activates. But we've seen overzealous taping jobs, covering the sprinklers with masking paper and a roll's worth of tape. That's too much. If the glass over any lights are cracked, get it fixed. Make sure your painters are keeping the booth clean.

How are flammable liquids being stored? Gasoline should be in safety cans, and any quantity above ten gallons needs to be in a flammable liquids cabinet or in your mixing room. If you have a partswasher that uses solvent, check that nothing is stored in the basin, so the lid can close completely if there's a fire. It's okay if some flammable liquid is stored outside of the mixing room or cabinet. But keep that amount to a minimum. Remember that aerosol cans are usually highly flammable. We don't want to see them next to anything that could heat up.

Label any unlabeled containers.

Inspect the electrical cords throughout the facility. Remember that electrical equipment needs to be grounded; if your extension cord is missing that third prong, the equipment plugged into it won't be grounded. Tape on the cord is a red flag for us: is it an inadequate attempt to repair damage?

What ventilation systems do you have? Tailpipe exhaust? Wall-mounted exhaust units? Spray booth and mixing room exhausts? Hold a piece of paper to them when they're on, to verify that they do actually work. Make sure they aren't blocked. Storing a five gallon drum under an exhaust unit blocks the air flow.

And finally, look at your waste, both hazardous and regulated. It needs to be labeled and kept closed. Any signs of leaks?

Doing these regular inspections takes some time, particularly at first. As you become proficient at doing them, you probably will find yourself catching things that you used to overlook – until it caused a problem. Consider farming out the work: have employees do the monthly inspections, so they start learning what to look for. The result: a facility in better shape overall.

If you have questions about building inspection requirements, safety, requirements for personal protective equipment, or general safety issues, call CHESS at 651-481-9787 or e-mail us at [CHESS@Chess-safety.com](mailto:CHESS@Chess-safety.com)

<p>This article is intended to provide general information (no advice) about current safety topics. To discuss your specific concerns and how CHESS may help, please contact CHESS at 651-481-9787 or <a href="mailto:chess@chess-safety.com">chess@chess-safety.com</a></p>
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