



Russell Munz

How to Get Community Business Done Faster & Easier

Stop the Waste Associated with Reacting to Last Minute Emergencies

By Russell Munz

This is the fourth article of a seven part series designed to help your community accomplish more this year. After working with numerous associations, our firm has seen a pattern of behaviors and processes that can be improved so you can operate your property more efficiently.

In my previous article I outlined how a board can get more done by rallying unit owner volunteers to help on projects by forming committees. However, if a board is constantly reacting to last minute emergencies, they will not have time to work on larger projects. In this article I will discuss 1) why emergencies are wasteful; 2) examples of emergencies; 3) and specific techniques your board can use to almost eliminate these last minute “crises.”

Emergency problems are unexpected situations or sudden occurrences of a serious and urgent nature that demand immediate action. Emergencies require volunteers to 1) stop all other projects; 2) re-prioritize TIME and MONEY away from other projects; 3) learn new problems and solutions, many for the first time—“re-invent the wheel;” 4) make quick decisions; 5) use operating funds that were not budgeted for or dip into reserves.

Emergencies cost more because they need to be dealt with NOW, you can't buy items on sale and you have no room to negotiate better prices of material and labor—you are lucky just to have someone that has time to show up on short notice.

Example emergencies include: 1) Roof problems 2) Heating Venting & Air Conditioning (HVAC) repairs & leaks; 3) Hot water heater leaks; 4) Washing machine and dish washer hose leaks. Most of these emergencies involve water that damages wall board, paint, carpeting, ceiling tiles, and electrical components. The reason water needs immediate attention, is that the more it spreads the more it damages as well as the increased risk of electrical shock hazard to residents.

However, an Association can reduce time spent being reactive to problems by adopting a more proactive management style. By identifying and confronting a recurring maintenance issue you will save money spent on repairs, keep your insurance reasonable and most importantly you will be rid of that problem.

Roofs

Hire a roofing consultant, structural engineer or other roofing expert to perform either annual or spring and fall roof inspections. The inspector should write a report and include pictures of the areas that need repair. Areas that routinely get reported are seams, flashing, and areas around drains. Lastly, hire a roofing contractor to perform all the repairs.

Heating Venting & Air Conditioning

Preventative maintenance in the spring and fall prior to the cooling and heating seasons will reduce owner discomfort, maintenance phone calls and costs. Changing filters on units allow them to run more efficiently and provide greater cooling or heating. Vacuuming and cleaning the drip pans and blowing out the condensation drain lines will reduce water leaks. By cleaning fuel filters, nozzles and oil tanks you will reduce clogs on oil burning boilers and emergency calls.

Hot water heaters

After usually 3-7 years of life units begin to leak. By inspecting for corrosion around the top and bottom of the unit you can

Recipe *File*

Tahitan Chicken or Beef

This is everyone's favorite!

Ingredients:

- 2 – 8 ounce cans of pineapple chunks
- 1/3 cup low sodium soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp cornstarch
- 1 tsp sugar
- canola oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 zucchini, snow peas, or broccoli
- 1 chopped red or green pepper
- 2 boneless chicken breasts or beef cut up into stir fry

Drain pineapple, reserve juice. Combine soy sauce, pineapple juice, pepper, cornstarch and sugar in a bowl. Set aside. Cook meat and garlic in hot oil. Add vegetables and cook about 5 minutes until tender. Add soy sauce mixture. Cook until heated through and sauce thickens. Stir in pineapple chunks and heat through. Serve over rice.





Rubber hoses dry out, crack and then leak.

spot signs of future leaks before they occur. You can institute mandatory inspections of water heater age and condition at your association. Additionally, you can mandate the use of drip pans to be placed under the water heater to catch water before it leaks into other units. Also, water shut off valves can be installed so if the water heater breaks, water supply to the unit will be shut off limiting water damage.

Washing machine and dishwasher hoses

Rubber hoses dry out, crack and then leak. Mandatory inspections or complete

replacements with 25 year guaranteed hoses can be done at a low cost.

Set up these programs on a recurring basis so they continue every year. You will save money by reducing the risk of leaks and repair costs, reducing the price per hour for labor, negotiate lower material costs, extend the useful life of building components which will push back capital replacement projects and you can hand in those inspection reports to your insurance agent and ask to have your premiums lowered!

Besides my short list of types of emergencies, one of the best ways to identify recurring maintenance problems is to make sure your Management Company or community has a maintenance monitoring center to answer and track maintenance calls. By capturing this information you can generate work order logs and see what types of maintenance and where these

recurring problems are occurring so you can fix them.

Then when most of these emergencies go away you can start to proactively run your community, make the board's job easier and move on to the bigger issues.

In my next article I will outline how to stop dealing with low value mundane tasks. When you spend time on more important management issues at your complex you will quickly see the difference. Until then I hope you use some of these techniques to eliminate at least one emergency waiting to happen at your community so you can get things done faster! ■

Mr. Munz is a former US ARMY Captain where he learned the importance of providing clear guidance and delegating to teammates. Prior to military service, Cornell University business programs taught him the importance of focusing time on tasks that have the greatest impact. Now he works with Pyramid Real Estate Group.