

## Considering Facilities

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One way to improve morale is from the ground up, the foundation of your meeting areas. Whether looking for a new meeting spot or assessing your current one, this can be difficult without a solid foundation and proper shelter to meet. Our weekly meetings are brief and the last thing we should worry about is the place where we should meet. I'd like to illustrate the importance of facility inspections to comply with CAP safety culture and general occupancy. Facilities can be maintained and brought up to safe and acceptable standards.

### **Things to consider when using a meeting facility:**

- Evacuation routes. Main/central areas should have at least two ways in or out.
- Fire prevention and protection along with currency. How compliant is the fire response? How effective is an area at dispersing a fire or enhancing it?
- Age of the building, relating to materials used within the structure, or coatings present which could include lead paint or asbestos. If you suspect these things, encourage an analysis.
- Properly marked areas, such as steep stairwells or electrical boxes with enough clearance to access breakers, fuses, switches, and outlets.
- Water lines properly identified. Example: sewer, hot and cold, stormwater runoff. If your facility has potable (drinkable) and non-potable water sources.
- Water supply, such as fountains and lavatories. Drains for obstruction. Testing of water quality and flow.
- Condition of windows and doors. Are they functional or nailed shut?
- Electrical installation. Example: stacked outlets, improperly hung or rated lines, exposed wires.
- Condition of floors. Example: Are carpets flat and edges sealed? Is wood or tiling in good condition? Is the concrete basement floor painted, and if so, is the paint in good condition?
- Railings and related protective scaffolding for stability. Don't lean on it until you give it a shake!
- Lighting (electrical) for all areas, attention to poorly lit areas.
- Heating and cooling elements. Elements should be clean and free from obstruction.
- Air circulation, especially considering basement areas where radon exposure could occur. This should also be assessed before moving to a new home.
- Mold or rotted areas. This can cause unexpected structure failure or respiratory issues.
- General cluttered spaces and unsanitary conditions. Proper housekeeping is necessary.
- Damage from rodent or insect infestation. Are preventative measures in place?
- Who is your building owner or landlord? How proactive are they in repairs and maintenance? Are they doing anything questionable? The safety of your members comes first, if you suspect the building owner is not complying with state or local regulations then legal officers need to be informed.

Consider the external aspect, how is the property maintained? Check for areas where water can pool, this may result in flooding and water penetrating the foundation. Pooling also leads to areas of ice during colder months. How is the local immediate vehicle traffic and frequency? Do your members need to cross streets to access the meeting facility? How exposed is your building to the public? Keeping your building locked and monitored is also important. We usually have items that need to be safeguarded so keeping your building locked when not in use is imperative.

Think about facilities located in areas exposed to chemicals, such as hangars and tarmacs subjected to oils and fuels. One could even go as far as the parking lot and inspect for contamination by vehicles. While we are not environmental analysts, we should be aware of possible contamination and how to avoid exposing yourself or others to potentially hazardous areas. Are there unused items of interest, like an old gas stove that was shut off years ago? Is the gas line inert? Make sure to verify all retired equipment and their points of power or fuel supply are inactive.

You could consider how the facility holds up to natural disasters, such as flood, blizzard, earthquake, extreme heat and cold, etc. How well is the facility prepared for the loss of utilities?

Also, consider the occupancy contract if one exists. Many of us utilize state or local property to meet, we have no say over much of what the property is used for, but they still must comply with state and local regulations. Perhaps getting a building inspector to help do the assessment for you and then advising through a legal officer to ensure your owner/landlord is doing everything they can to prevent building dilapidation.

**Takeaway:**

Keep your senses open and recognize risk factors in your own facility. Many mishaps could occur from a poorly maintained building. We are not generally responsible for maintenance, but all items should be in working order and immediately repaired upon finding them inoperable. We can help prevent mishaps in areas with something as simple as cleaning or adding a caution sign. Even a temporary fix like safety cones over an uncovered drain will go a long way. Remember, temporary fixes are just that. Don't let it loiter! A proactive response will ensure risks of personal injury are minimized.

**Recommendation:**

Perform a facility inspection by breaking members up and assigning them to different rooms/areas of the complex. Have them list at least one hazard and one improvement that could be made. Regroup and go over what everyone found to share findings.