

# CLEAN SWEEP

Just who can you get to clean your condo anyways?



If you're like most condominium owners, you've probably never given much thought to who vacuums the hallways of your building or how often the windows get washed.

You may notice and gripe when a stain seems to sit in the carpet too long, or a candy wrapper lies in the lobby for a few days, but do you notice when it is cleaned up?

The fact is, cleaning costs are part of your condo fee and allow your condo board to contract a cleaning company to do regular maintenance on your building. Chances are, while you're at work or too busy to notice, cleaning crews are hard at work in your hallways, lobbies and elevators, mopping, dusting, polishing, vacuuming, emptying garbages and wiping walls.

The cleaning budget set out by your condo board is likely lower than that of any office building, which means there will be a constant effort to balance the cleanest clean available with the lowest price and time investment possible. While many condos may only be on a once-a-week cleaning schedule, a three- to five-day a week schedule is generally recommended by cleaners.

Bill Todd, president and owner of Cleanmax Inc., explains that this is in the best interest of the owners, so that incidental messes don't sit for long periods. "For example, if we only come Monday and Wednesday mornings, and

there is a coffee spill on Monday afternoon, it sits there for two days."

Todd says that with a three-day-a-week (or less) schedule, problems arise when the level of service and expectations are not communicated to the residents. "When we take over a new development we'll let the owners know what we'll be doing," he says. "It's about managing expectations."

Generally, a contracted cleaning crew does a thorough cleaning of the entire building over the course of the week, vacuuming, mopping and dusting specific areas on certain days and spot-checking the whole building each day. Common duties which fall under the jurisdiction of the cleaning company are vacuuming entrance mats; mopping any tile floors; cleaning the lobby glass; vacuuming hallways and common rooms; checking and replacing burnt out lightbulbs; washing or spot-cleaning walls; dusting; cleaning and polishing the doors and cab of the elevator; cleaning common equipment and amenities (kitchen, fitness equipment, games room) and emptying wastebaskets. The cleaning company may also be responsible for updating the intercom, hanging elevator pads on moving

days, and being the "eyes" of the building, watching for broken doors, problems with appliances and so on.

Large, less frequent cleanings such as washing all exterior windows and cleaning the carpets may be done by the same cleaning company, or contracted out to a separate service. Todd points out that each condo building is different and suggests that each condo board should develop a tailored cleaning schedule based on their specific needs, rather than waiting until windows or floors are dirty to book a cleaning. A schedule might include having the well-used areas of carpet, such as the main floor and carpeted stairs to the parkade, cleaned once a month, areas that are slightly less busy cleaned every other month, and the rest of the carpets cleaned once a year. Windows should generally be cleaned in the spring and fall.

Another important annual task to be scheduled is the cleaning of the furnace and ducts. John Blazosek, owner of Clean-All Furnace Cleaners, says that while tenants should change their furnace filters often throughout the year, it is also important to book a complete furnace cleaning and filter change once a year, and that the ducts should be cleaned every two to four years.

Blazosek adds that in his line of work he sees too many furnaces that have been neglected, and that this can be a hazard.

According to Nick Zannis, owner of The Oracle Team, cleaning companies rely largely on word of mouth. There is not much of a need for marketing as there is plenty of work to go around in our growing city. Condo board members who are looking for a cleaning company may ask other condo boards or their management company for recommendations.

If you have a complaint about the state of your condo's common areas, your best bet is to alert a member of your condo board. The board will then most likely contact the management company, or possibly the cleaning company directly, says Maria Bartolotti, managing director and owner of New Concept Management. **CL**