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## DOOR HARDWARE MAINTENANCE GUIDE

Door hardware maintenance is a critical yet often overlooked aspect of building management. When done consistently, it prevents unexpected failures, extends equipment life, and helps maintain security and code compliance.

This guide outlines practical, field-tested strategies that maintenance managers can use to train teams, schedule preventive care, and ensure reliable operation across all types of facilities.

### 1. Routine Inspections

Routine inspection is the foundation of a good door hardware maintenance program. Maintenance teams should inspect each door every three to six months, depending on usage levels. Hinges should be evaluated for looseness, wear, or noise, which often indicate alignment issues or mounting fatigue. Locks and latches must be tested for smooth operation and proper alignment with strike plates. If a door doesn't latch easily or sticks when closing, it's likely out of alignment or has a worn latch. Handles and knobs should be firm and responsive; looseness is typically the result of fasteners backing out. Door closers should be checked for fluid leaks, erratic movement, or failure to latch fully, all of which may require adjustment or replacement. Any weatherstripping should also be examined for tearing or separation, especially on exterior doors where energy efficiency is a concern.

### 2. Cleaning Procedures

Cleaning hardware is an important but simple task that preserves finishes and prevents corrosion. Maintenance staff should clean door hardware with a mild soap and water solution, using a soft cloth to wipe away dirt and buildup. Abrasive cleaners and harsh chemicals should be avoided, as they can damage protective coatings and accelerate corrosion. Stainless steel components benefit from a non-abrasive stainless steel cleaner. After cleaning, all hardware should be wiped dry to remove moisture, particularly on exterior doors or in humid environments. Before using any new cleaner, it's advisable to test it in an inconspicuous spot to avoid accidental damage to the finish.

### 3. Tightening and Realignment

Screws and fasteners naturally loosen over time, especially on high-traffic doors. As part of regular maintenance, staff should check all hinges, handles, locks, and mounting plates for tightness. If a door begins to drag, bind, or miss the strike plate, realignment of hinges or repositioning of the strike may be required. Many problems can be resolved simply by tightening loose hardware or replacing worn screws with longer or stronger fasteners. Closers also need occasional adjustments to

maintain proper closing speed and force. Ensuring that all components are tightly fastened and correctly aligned helps preserve both function and longevity.

#### 4. Lubrication Best Practices

Proper lubrication is key to keeping hardware quiet and functioning smoothly. Hinges should be lubricated every six months using a silicone-based lubricant or light machine oil. This eliminates squeaks and reduces friction. Locks and cylinders, however, should not be lubricated with oil. Instead, teams should use a graphite-based powder or dry lock lubricant to avoid attracting dust and debris. This routine keeps moving parts from binding and helps prevent premature wear.

#### 5. Lock and Security Maintenance

Locks are essential to the security of any facility and must be maintained accordingly. They should be tested regularly to ensure smooth operation. If a lock begins to stick, the issue may be corrected with lubrication, but persistent problems should be escalated. Maintenance teams should also establish a schedule for rekeying or replacing locks in response to lost keys, tenant turnover, or security breaches. For facilities using electronic locks, battery checks and replacements should be part of regular rounds. Doors that are out of alignment often create unnecessary stress on locking mechanisms, so hardware function should always be reviewed alongside door alignment.

#### 6. Closers and Panic Hardware

Door closers and panic hardware play a critical role in life safety and should be inspected frequently. Closers must close the door fully and latch it without slamming or stopping short. Any leaking hydraulic fluid indicates internal failure and warrants immediate replacement. Panic hardware should operate smoothly, releasing the latch with minimal pressure. All components should be securely mounted and free of obstruction. Teams should reference manufacturer specifications before adjusting closer tension or panic device settings to avoid compromising performance or violating fire codes.

#### 7. Weatherproofing and Exterior Door Maintenance

Exterior doors require special attention due to exposure to the elements. Maintenance personnel should inspect weatherstripping, door sweeps, and thresholds for signs of wear or detachment. Worn seals can allow drafts, water, and pests into the building and should be replaced promptly. Debris often builds up in thresholds and can prevent proper closure, so these areas must be kept clean. In doors with built-in drainage systems, maintenance staff should ensure that weep holes and drains are clear of obstructions. Keeping exterior door hardware in good shape improves energy efficiency and protects the door system from long-term damage.

#### 8. Documentation and Scheduling

Structured documentation is essential for tracking maintenance work and planning replacements. Maintenance managers should maintain a centralized log for all doors and hardware, noting inspection dates, issues found, repairs performed, and parts replaced. This helps identify patterns, such as recurring problems with specific doors or models, and supports budgeting for future needs.

Maintenance scheduling should include at least quarterly checks for most facilities, with monthly reviews for high-use or critical access points.

## 9. When to Call a Professional

While much of door hardware maintenance can be handled in-house, certain situations call for a licensed locksmith or door specialist. Jammed locks, broken cylinders, or leaking door closers should be addressed by professionals. Specialized components, including fire-rated, DOC-M compliant, or automated systems, must be maintained in accordance with code and manufacturer requirements. Attempting to repair these without the proper expertise can lead to noncompliance, further damage, or legal liability. When in doubt, maintenance managers should seek certified support to ensure safety and reliability.

## Summary & Conclusion

Though door hardware may seem like a minor aspect of a facility, its impact on safety, security, and day-to-day operations is significant. By building consistent inspection routines, using proper cleaning and where required lubrication methods, documenting work thoroughly, and knowing when to escalate issues, maintenance teams can prevent failures and extend the useful life of doors and hardware. A disciplined approach to door hardware maintenance ensures that building occupants remain safe, secure, and uninterrupted.