

MAINTENANCE GUIDEBOOK I - MAINTENANCE PROGRAM CHAPTER THREE - STAFFING

SECTION A ORGANIZATION

The structure of a maintenance organization will depend on the skills and abilities of the maintenance staff and the characteristics and conditions of the development. While the "standard" guideline for staffing a maintenance department is one maintenance employee for every 50 dwelling units, the specific needs and composition of each development will influence the actual staffing requirements. For example, developments for the elderly generally require less maintenance than do other types. Other factors that may affect the make-up of a maintenance staff are building types (for example, high-rises), extra-large grounds, poorly constructed units, installed heat pumps, widely scattered sites, age of a development, completed modernization, and mix of unit types (for instance, 4-bedrooms units generally require more maintenance than do 2-bedrooms units).

Small HAs have limited staffs because of their size and operating budgets. Therefore, maintenance employees in these HAs have to be more versatile and capable of assuming more diverse responsibilities than their counterparts employed by larger HAs.

SECTION B JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The responsibilities and required qualifications for each maintenance job are outlined in the job description, which provides a reference on which basis interviews can be conducted, and a standard against which an employee's performance should be measured. The job description should provide information in at least three important areas:

- Responsibilities and duties of the job, and the tasks normally performed by the employee;
- Supervision received and given;
- The knowledge and skills necessary to meet the qualifications.

Included in Appendix B are sample position descriptions which can be used as model formats, or can be custom-tailored to meet the specific needs of an HA.

SECTION C RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION

Timely and careful searches for required personnel, both new and for promotion, are significant HA functions. The time and expense involved in finding and promoting the best-qualified personnel will be more than made up in improved efficiency, and in the reduced need for training, supervision, and disciplinary action.

HAs should have established recruitment and promotion policies that include:

- Provisions for timely employment and promotion;
- Clearly defined organizational structure, job classifications, and job descriptions;
- Collective-bargaining agreements, if applicable;
- Equal-employment opportunities;
- Standardized interview procedures and testing methods;
- Reference checks.

HAs may want to develop and maintain a pool of qualified candidates from which to select employees as opportunities arise. To facilitate this effort, the HA should develop a network for each class of job to be filled at some point in the future. Candidates for this network could be selected from present staff, residents, local employers, trade schools and associations, and placement services.

SECTION D TRAINING

To continuously improve overall performance, it is important to provide the HA staff with on-going training opportunities. The training is used to refine or develop new technical skills and to make employees familiar with new policies, procedures, and performance standards. HAs are encouraged to also include its residents in the training, where appropriate. Depending on the nature and complexity of training, it may be conducted by in-house personnel, videos, or outside sources. Smaller HAs may find it more effective to use the latter or to take advantage of pertinent seminars. Training should be a high-profile effort covering, at least, the following topics:

- Basic vocabulary and techniques useful in understanding housing issues and physical facilities;
- Techniques for supervising, inspecting, estimating, and scheduling;
- Performance standards of the HA;
- Contracting and contractual obligations;
- Specific skill training for technical employees.

In developing and implementing a training program or plan, the following steps should be included:

- Establish and prioritize training needs:
A review of completed work orders may indicate the need to improve the mechanic's skill in the field or plumbing or the maintenance of electrical equipment. Areas with the greatest needs or weaknesses should receive the most attention.
- Develop training strategies:
Determine what training can be conducted by in-house personnel and what will require training by outside sources. Determine what topics should be covered and what models or mock-ups will be needed for those topics. Schedule a time and place for training.

- **Obtain training materials:**
Identify and obtain training texts, manuals, and videos most applicable to the training course and comprehension level of attendees.
- **Plan training sessions in advance:**
Plan sessions as far in advance as possible so that all affected parties can plan and prepare for them.
- **Include safety concerns in the agenda:**
Every training session should include information concerning applicable safety rules and regulations, including those of OSHA, government standards and regulations, required protective clothing and equipment, and known hazards.
- Resident participation in all applicable training programs should be encouraged by HAs.

SECTION E EVALUATIONS

An employee's performance should be evaluated at least once a year, although more frequent reviews can be conducted as needed. The evaluations should be based on written standards and the job description. (See Appendix B for sample Employee Performance Evaluation.) The reasons for conducting performance evaluations include:

- To discuss with the employee his or her strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement;
- To assess the employee's potential for promotion;
- To build a documented record of performance (both good and bad) for future reference and to support any necessary personnel action.

Some principles to keep in mind when developing an employee-evaluation system are:

- Standards should be clear and easily understood;
- Evaluation and feedback should be as frequent as possible;
- Performance standards should be objective and easily measurable;
- The evaluation, employee's response, and any required follow-up should be documented.

SECTION F RESIDENTS, MINORITIES, HANDICAPPED

HUD encourages the involvement of residents in the maintenance of HA developments whenever such work can be performed by them while maintaining an acceptable level of quality. Their participation in the maintenance of the development usually results in better care and decreased vandalism. Further, Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, and HUD's implementing regulations at 24 CFR 135, require that HAs provide economic opportunities to low-income persons during the course of their operations. HUD recently issued revisions to Part 135 which require that HAs establish specific goals in employment, training, and contracting. HAs should review the revised regulation to ensure that their employment practices are consistent with it. Federal and local laws prohibit discrimination against minorities and the handicapped in hiring when their training and capabilities qualify them for employment.

END OF CHAPTER THREE