

February 14, 2016

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES BRANCH TERRITORY

Re: Biennial Assessments Performed by Maintenance Trainers

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letters dated January 8, 2008, and December 31, 2005, to all bodies of elders. It is evident that the arrangement to perform biennial (once every two years) inspections of Kingdom Halls has resulted in many benefits. Not only does your cooperation help to extend the life of buildings, it also contributes to the safety of those who attend our Christian meetings. As part of the transition to the Local Design/Construction (LDC) program, maintenance trainers are being appointed and assigned to specific properties to assist with the maintenance program.

### **Biennial assessments**

One aspect of a maintenance trainer's assignment is to schedule and conduct biennial assessments of Kingdom Halls or other buildings included with the property, such as special full-time servant housing, literature depots, etc. New forms have been designed to provide the branch office with details regarding the current condition of each property and help forecast renovations. While it is not necessary for each elder to be present for the assessment, it is important that the operating committee or the brother assigned to care for maintenance be present to aid in collecting building information, such as drawings, past construction or renovation dates, and element replacement dates.

Once the assessment is completed, the maintenance trainer will schedule a time to review the *Facility Condition Survey* (DC-96) report with all bodies of elders using the Kingdom Hall. This report will be provided to the elders prior to its submission to LDC representatives. Therefore, it is no longer necessary for congregations to use the *Safety Inspection Work Sheet* (TO-34). However, the elders should continue to take an active interest in the building's condition and promptly repair safety or maintenance issues noted in the DC-96 report or found during regularly scheduled maintenance.

### **Prevention of moisture-related problems**

A commonly reported maintenance issue involves moisture-related problems in Kingdom Halls. Left unchecked, moisture from water leaks, condensation, infiltration, poor drainage, or flooding can cause costly damage to building structures and finishes. All leaks must be repaired immediately. If the affected area is not cleaned and dried within 48 hours, further problems may result. In high humidity areas, the HVAC system may need to operate briefly each day, even when the building is unoccupied. This will prevent dampness and mold. If the Kingdom Hall has a serious moisture problem that is beyond your ability to properly repair or if the cost exceeds your approval limits, please discuss the circumstances with your assigned maintenance trainer.

### **Elders' responsibility to care for legal matters**

As a reminder, titleholding congregations should continue to keep their property documents file up-to-date. Serious legal problems have developed by lapses in the following areas:

- Annually checking the status of a property's real property tax exemption, including updating the congregation's mailing address with the local assessor.
- Annually filing corporation reports (where required).
- Complying with local regulatory requirements.

These matters must be cared for conscientiously. For congregations holding title using the trustee arrangement, it is important that three current trustees be appointed at all times. This should be documented using the trustee forms posted on jw.org. Congregations holding title by corporation should regularly elect directors and officers as described in the corporation's bylaws. As the maintenance trainer will inquire about these matters when performing future assessments; please be prepared to comment on the title status. Further information regarding reviewing ownership documents will be provided in due course.

### **Maintenance Trainer expenses**

A typical assessment involves a considerable amount of time, preparation, and traveling for the maintenance trainer and those who accompany him. As a reminder, the elders should seek to hospitably care for these volunteers. This includes rooming, meals, and reimbursement of related expenses (such as fuel or office supplies) as needed. It is not necessary for the elders to present a resolution to the congregation for approval to reimburse the brother(s) from congregation or Kingdom Hall Operating Committee funds. This is considered a recurring operating expense.—Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 4:9; 3 John 5-8.

Your prompt attention to needed repairs, whether noted on the DC-96 report or identified during your routine maintenance activity, is greatly appreciated. When publishers do all they can to keep the Kingdom Hall in good condition, it brings praise to Jehovah and saves donated funds.—2 Ki. 12:4, 5.

Please be assured of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*JW Congregation Support, Inc.*

c: Circuit overseers  
Maintenance trainers  
Maintenance representatives  
Assembly Hall overseers  
Bible School Facility in Palm Coast, Florida  
Remote Translation Offices

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PS to secretary:

This letter has been added to the list of policy letters that will be cited in *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders* (S-22).

PS to Assembly Hall overseers, Bible School Facility in Palm Coast, Florida, and Remote Translation Offices:

This letter replaces letters dated March 29, 2007, to all Assembly Hall Committees, and March 30, 2007, to all Regional Building Committees regarding Assembly Hall inspections.

Please note that the basic principles outlined above should also be followed regarding future inspections for your facilities, which will be coordinated by your assigned maintenance representative. The *Assembly Hall and Property Inspection Work Sheet* (S-108) should no longer be submitted to the branch office.