



## BRICKWORK & WATERPROOFING

### The Building Lives

When it comes to building restoration, most experts agree that the two areas of prime concern for co-ops in 1985 are preventive maintenance and parapet work.

"A building can be a bottomless pit of problems," notes Alan D. Marcus, vice president of United Inspection Service, an architectural consulting firm. "If you maintain it every year—a little bit here, a little bit there—it's not going to be a big problem. But if you don't go for a checkup for 25 years, you're going to need major work."

An impetus to do such maintenance has been given by Local Law 10, which mandates inspections every five years. But engineers and contractors agree that a yearly inspection is best.

"All Local Law 10 says is, 'Thou Shalt Not Hit A Passerby With A Brick,'" notes Kurt Rosenbaum, a consulting engineer. "It deals with immediate, life-threatening hazards, not with long-term problems."

The most pressing of those cited by engineers and contractors is the deterioration of the parapet walls on the roof, a common difficulty on buildings ten years old and older. The parapet, placed as it is on the side and top of structures, takes the most physical abuse: wind, rain, and ultraviolet rays.

Periodic inspections of the coping stones and the caulking can help slow this process and prevent the need to replace the entire parapet, or even sections of it, which could cost from \$5,000 to \$500,000. Experts cite these measures for parapet care:

(1) *Replacing damaged or cracked bricks.*

(2) *Capping the coping stones with aluminum, if necessary.*

(3) *Pointing*, or replacing the mortar between the bricks. Consultants and contractors note that the old mortar must be removed or else the new material doesn't "take," popping out soon after installation. Pointing is very important because loose bricks will cause openings through which water can seep.

(4) *Caulking* coping stone joints. This means putting a rubber sealant between the joints of the coping stones to help resist moisture. When caulking, it is crucial to use a material that has elasticity, allowing the bricks to expand (in summer) and contract (in winter). Bad caulking doesn't allow such movement, causing cracks.

Similarly, it is important to use repair substances which let a building "breathe," meaning that moisture can enter and exit.

Some cement washes, tar, and asphalt do not, and in the winter, the moisture will freeze, expand, and cause cracks. Then, during warmer winter days, it thaws, is filled again, and the "freeze-thaw cycle" continues, causing small cracks to become larger.

Wayne Bellet chief of operations at Bellet Waterproofing advises against cement washes. "It covers the holes," he says, "but eventually it will fall off. It doesn't do the job very well and you'll have to do it again much sooner than if you had paid the money for a proper repointing or repair job." Adds Robert Castaldi, president of Castle Restoration: "It also looks terrible." Breathable cement washes are fine for interior parapet work, however.

Proper maintenance can cost money, and Kurt Rosenbaum advises boards to take annual building upkeep into account in their yearly budgets—something he and many other experts feel is not given enough attention by co-ops. "A building is a living thing," he notes. "It needs food and care. If you treat it like a living, breathing human being you can't go wrong." Or as Castaldi notes: "Preventive maintenance is the most important item. Penny wise and dollar foolish, you know."

