ROOF MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

This is a checklist for a routine walk of a flat or low slope commercial roof. It is written to be used rather than read: five sections, each a list of what to look at and what a problem looks like.

It does not replace an inspection by a roofer. It is what a facilities team can do between professional visits, so the professional visit starts from something rather than from nothing.

BEFORE YOU GO UP

Do not go up alone, in wet, windy or icy conditions, or where the roof cannot be reached safely. Know where the edges, the skylights and any fragile areas are before you step out. If the building has a permit system, use it, and log the visit either way.

Take a camera, a numbered roof plan, the last report and something to write on. Take nothing that can be put down and left behind.

THE SURFACE

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ The open field of the membrane	Splits, cuts, punctures, scuffs, anything that has been dropped and left
☐ Blisters and bubbles	Raised areas, soft underfoot, growing compared with the last photograph
☐ Surfacing	Bare patches where granules or gravel have gone, chalky residue on a coating
☐ Color and texture	Areas noticeably darker, harder or more brittle than the rest of the roof
☐ Walkways and traffic routes	Worn pads, missing pads, wear on the membrane where people cut the corner
☐ Anything green	Moss, weeds or organic matter, marking a spot that stays damp

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ Loose material	Stones off the ballast line, offcuts, packaging, fixings, washers, tools

THE DETAILS

This is where roofs leak. Every item here is handmade, which is why it fails first.

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ Seams and laps	An edge you can lift, a line of dirt along the seam, a visible step, anything sealed with mastic
☐ Upstands at walls and parapets	The membrane pulling away from the wall, a gap at the top, a slumped corner
☐ Terminations and edge trim	Loose or missing fasteners, a bar that has lifted, sealant that has cracked or fallen out
☐ Coping and edge metal	Open joints, lifted sections, staining down the wall beneath a joint
☐ Curbs around units	Gaps at the corners, a flashing that has slipped, fixings driven straight through the membrane
☐ Pipe boots and collars	Splits at the top, clamps missing, the collar standing away from the pipe
☐ Penetrations and supports	Anything bolted, fixed or resting directly on the membrane without a proper detail
☐ Skylights and hatches	Cracked domes, failed seals, flashing lifted at the corners, a hatch left open

THE DRAINAGE

Do this section first if the roof is wet: standing water explains most of what you find elsewhere.

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ Outlets and sumps	Leaves, silt or debris in the sump, water still sitting in it between rains

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ Strainers and domes	Missing, broken, loose or packed solid with debris
☐ Clamping rings	Bolts loose or missing, the membrane not gripped evenly all round
☐ Scuppers and through wall outlets	A blocked throat, damaged flashing, staining down the outside wall
☐ Overflows	None present at all, blocked, or evidence that one has been running
☐ Gutters and downpipes	Debris, sagging, water marks above the gutter line, a joint that has opened
☐ Standing water	Water still present a day or two after rain, or a tide mark showing where it stood
☐ The fall	Water running away from an outlet rather than toward it

THE EQUIPMENT

Most rooftop equipment belongs to somebody else and sits on your roof. Check the interface.

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ Condensate discharge	Water running straight onto the membrane, a permanently damp patch, staining
☐ Unit bases and stands	Feet bearing directly on the membrane, pads that have moved, rust staining
☐ Access panels and covers	Panels open, missing, or propped rather than fastened
☐ Cable trays and conduit	Runs resting on the membrane, fixings through the roof, cables under foot traffic
☐ Solar arrays and screens	Debris packed along the upwind edge, ballast blocks that have shifted, worn membrane under a foot
☐ Ductwork and extract	Loose sections, grease staining around a kitchen extract, damage to the surface below it

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ Evidence of recent work	New fixings, offcuts, sealant, footprints or scuffs on a route you do not recognize

THE INTERIOR

The inside of the building reports on the roof, often earlier than people expect.

LOOK AT	WHAT A PROBLEM LOOKS LIKE
☐ Ceiling tiles and finishes	New stains, a stain that has grown, a tile that has sagged or fallen
☐ Above the ceiling, where safe	Damp on the deck, rust lines, drips running along a beam or a duct
☐ Walls below upstands	Damp patches at high level, blown plaster, staining at a corner
☐ Light fittings and services	Water near a fitting, which is an immediate safety issue rather than a roof finding
☐ Insulation in the void	Damp, compressed or stained material
☐ What the occupants say	A drip somebody mopped up and never reported, a smell of damp, a recurring puddle

Water on a ceiling in cold dry weather, spread over an area rather than dripping in one place, is more often condensation than a leak. Record the conditions either way.

WHAT TO DO WITH IT

The checklist is worth nothing on its own. What matters is what happens afterwards.

1. **Photograph everything you find.** Twice: wide enough to place it, close enough to see it.
2. **Date it.** Without a date you have a picture of a roof.
3. **Mark it on the plan.** The same numbered areas every time, so somebody else can find it.
4. **Rate it.** Fix now, fix this year, or watch, with the reason written beside it.

5. **Keep it where it will survive staff turnover.** A record held in one person's inbox leaves when they do.
6. **Compare it with the last one.** This is the whole point. One walk is a snapshot. A run of them shows what is changing, and what is changing is what deserves the money.

Send anything rated fix now to your roofer the same day, with the photographs and the location. The rest goes into the next scheduled visit.

Want the reasoning behind these checks? Read flat roof maintenance. Putting it on a schedule? Build a roof maintenance plan.

Walked by _____ Date _____ Roof _____