

Window Leaks Caused By Lintel Deterioration

What's a lintel?

Lintels are installed above a buildings' windows and entrances to support and to act as a shelf for masonry. They can be comprised of wood, stone, concrete, or steel. Lintels can be load-bearing for structural purposes, a decorative architectural element, or a combination of both. Generally, in older commercial facilities, existing lintels are comprised of steel.

How can I tell if there's deterioration?

Lintels, like bricks, are tremendously tough, but not indestructible. Factors like cracks in the exterior masonry, humid climate, heavy precipitation and the freezing and thawing of cold Ohio winters weaken lintels and surrounding masonry. This allows moisture to leach inside, deteriorating the lintels, causing rust to occur in the form of severe oxidation. If left untreated, the rust build-up causes the lintel to expand and lose strength, creating added pressure against the surrounding masonry.



Often times during and after a rainstorm, lintel deterioration is mistaken for leaking windows and doors when water seeps into the building from above the opening. The cause of the water leak may not have anything to do with the window or door. Should this condition occur, a building's facility manager should first thoroughly check the exterior of the building for signs of lintel decay.

Perform routine maintenance inspections

A building's facility manager should perform thorough inspections around each window and door opening twice a year – once in the spring after winter thaws and once in the fall after the hot summer. Look for cracks, sagging brickwork, or movement and shifting of the masonry. By performing routine maintenance inspections, lintel deterioration can be caught early which is crucial to preventing major structural issues and interior damages to walls, ceilings, windows, and doors.