

FACILITIES FRIGHTS



A Collection of Short Facilities Horror Stories



INTRODUCTION

Welcome, reader. **My name is Edgar Allen Wrench**, and I'll be your guide through the dimly lit corridors of Facilities Frights, a collection of true-to-life horror stories from the world of facilities management.

Each story you're about to read is inspired by real challenges that facilities professionals face. Oversights that start small, like a misplaced asset record, a deferred inspection, or an outdated system, can grow into something much scarier.

Join me as we explore the spooky tales of three facilities leaders who found themselves in terrifying and tumultuous circumstances. As you read, ask yourself a truly scary question:
Could these stories happen to me?



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THE CHILLING CASE OF THE MILLION DOLLAR LADDER

It is a dark, gloomy morning, and John sits in his corporate office reviewing expenses for the last 12 months. As Director of Facilities for Olovun Stores, a major retailer, he manages hundreds of stores and thousands of maintenance requests. But the last few months have been more stressful than ever.

Something is off, he thinks. *Why are we so over budget?* He flips through the binders stacked across his desk, filled with invoices and project summaries, and scans his email for POs. *Did we have a major replacement I am not accounting for?* He is diligent, but with so many properties, it's hard to keep track of them all. He calls Chris, his senior facility manager for the West, hoping for clarity.

"Chris, I'm trying to make sense of our expenses. We are way over budget. Can you email records for maintenance costs over the last month?"

"Hard to hear you. I'm with the facade team at the new Denver site doing an install. I'll call back this afternoon."

John hangs up, frustrated, and returns to the binders and capital plans. He boots up the company's old CMMS and combs through assets and maintenance records, wrestling with the clunky interface, but it offers no real insight. It tracks assets, but vendor spend, parts purchases, and labor hours live in the stack of binders on his desk and spreadsheets on his computer.

Later that afternoon, his phone rings. *It's Chris—thank goodness!*

"I'll send vendor POs for last month, but I have an idea. We have been using vendor XCX Solutions a lot more lately to help with all the lighting failures. I'd start there."

John winces. The older stores have been having issues with their lighting and failures are frequent. He may be onto something.

Fifteen minutes later, emails arrive with hundreds of vendor POs. John starts with XCX Solutions and scrolls. Lighting repairs, HVAC tune-ups, electrical checks. Then one line catches his eye: Expedited Ladder - \$800.

He opens another invoice. The same charge. Then another. It appears on every single lighting job. He calls the vendor.

"Hey Mark, it's John at Olovun Stores. We've been billed for ladders at almost every site. That cannot be right."



The line is silent for a moment before Mark responds. "Hey John, I'm happy to help. When we get a work order, we ask for site details, like ceiling heights, and any other relevant information. But your team still sends requests through email or phone call and often overlook including those details. When our techs arrive, they often realize they need special equipment to reach the fixtures. We rent ladders or buy them outright to finish the job. The costs get passed on to you. It's in our MSA."

The words hit John like a freight train.

He pivots back to the computer and opens more invoices. The total keeps climbing, and he adds the numbers in his spreadsheet. Over \$1 million dollars in ladder charges.

Just then his email dings. John looks up and sees a new message from one of his regional managers. Another lighting system has just gone out.



THE DAY THE AC STOPPED WORKING

Maria looks out of the window of her third-floor office after wrapping up a call. Today is like many days at her company's Phoenix headquarters, bright blue skies with a blazing sun. The temperature is already reaching the high 90s, and it isn't even noon yet.

As the head of corporate facilities, she is responsible for delivering comfortable workplace environments that stoke productivity. Today was especially important because a major client was visiting.

She decides to do a quick scan to ensure everything is good to go. The lights are bright (but not too bright) in the conference room, air feels cool, and the welcome gift bags sit neatly at each seat. Satisfied, Maria goes to lunch.

When she returns, the elevator opens to a wall of heat. It was as if the office had suddenly turned into a sauna.

Quickly, she makes her way to her desk and fires off a message to her team of technicians.

"Hey, is anyone available to check out the AC on the third floor ASAP?" While waiting for a response, she wipes a bead of sweat from her brow. "Oh no, the customers!" She remembers the meeting scheduled to take place at the top of the hour, and unfortunately, there is no other available conference room for the meeting.

Still awaiting a response, she tries to figure out what happened. With such a large building in a hot location, her team is always on top of AC preventative maintenance, and issues like this almost never occur. Then, she receives a call.

"Hey Maria, Tony here. I saw your message. I'm on the roof, and I have some bad news." The words hang in the air. "It looks like we deferred maintenance on the unit that provides the bulk of the third floor with AC. It's going to be at least a day before we can get this fixed, assuming we have the right parts in the warehouse."

How could this have been missed? she thinks.



After reviewing her records, she realizes that her team did miss the critical PM for the third floor AC unit. The current process for work orders was manual, using both an older CMMS, emails, and written-out forms. She knew that a lapse like this was bound to happen.

Just then, she hears the elevator ding as the customers walk out onto the floor. "They weren't kidding about the Phoenix heat!" one exclaims. "Is it always this hot here?" The account manager is with them, and he is visibly upset, knowing that now the most memorable part of today's meeting will be the intolerable heat, instead of the business at hand.



I SEE GHOST ASSETS

It's a cold and stormy day at the L.Lever Corporation's primary warehouse in Boston.

Randy, Sr. Facilities Manager, sits alone at his desk, trying to make sense of all the work orders across their large real estate portfolio. Due to the nature of the products inside the warehouse, building climate is paramount, and unintended humidity has the potential to warp and destroy the product inventory.

It is a manual process. Using his finger as a guide, he traces down the screen, finding an asset and its details before shifting to his work order management system to confirm the last time maintenance was performed. His phone buzzes.

"Randy, it's Jeff. We've got water pooling near the loading dock."

Randy's palms begin to sweat. Situations like this are something out of his nightmares.

He heads to the floor and to his horror, water is spreading across the concrete, collecting near the far corner. He follows the water and crouches down to get a good look at the sump pump.

"How could this happen? I'm certain all of the sump pumps were just checked and serviced by the team."

He quickly radios his technicians and watches them begin to work before heading back to his office.

He opens the asset spreadsheet. He scrolls through the list, but no asset number matches the one he just saw. He checks his work order software next. *No record. No maintenance. Nothing.*



A ghost asset.

Because it didn't exist in the system, no one has inspected it or performed any maintenance at all...until it failed.

His team phones him to say that the pump has been replaced. Within an hour, the water starts to drain, but Randy doesn't feel relief. "How many more ghost assets are haunting this place?"



CONCLUSION

Now, dear reader, if you have made it this far, well done. Your reward?

A playbook to ensure you don't find yourself in next year's edition of Facilities Frights.
You'll find real-world guidance from industry experts who've lived these challenges firsthand.

Happy Halloween,

Edgar A. Wrench

