

# A DAY in the LIFE



Maintenance engineer Travis Long examines rooftop machinery to confirm all equipment is operating efficiently.

## A day in the life of plant operations

From the moment the first lights turn on to the emergence of unexpected repairs late in the day, a dedicated team keeps Columbus Community Hospital running smoothly. The plant operations department makes certain the hospital's buildings and services are safe, compliant and ready for patients, visitors and staff at all times. Without this behind-the-scenes work, the hospital could not function at such a high level of care.

Led by James Frauendorfer, the hospital's facilities management director, the team handles everything from everyday maintenance to large-scale projects. Its work touches nearly every area of the hospital, from patient rooms to operating rooms, and from parking lots to the roof. The public may not immediately notice many of the department's contributions, but they are essential for supporting the people who deliver care.

"Our primary role is to make sure the buildings and services are safe and compliant for everyone who uses them," Frauendorfer said. "That includes patients, visitors and staff. Everything we do ensures the hospital is a place people can trust."

### Balancing the workload

In plant operations, no day is ever the same. Some tasks are planned in advance, but urgent repairs and new requests can change priorities in an instant. The team often has to adjust on the fly while balancing routine inspections and long-term projects.

"One of our biggest challenges is maintaining compliance while supporting a high patient load," Frauendorfer said. "We overcome this by working closely with department directors to find downtime so we can complete inspections and work

orders. It takes coordination, planning and communication." The team's work is not limited to the hospital itself – plant operations also prepares all off-site facilities for staff and patients. This includes the Columbus Fieldhouse, South Campus and other specialized locations.

The team's work at these sites ensures every department is fully operational and compliant, no matter where it is.

### A department with depth

The plant operations team includes a diverse group of skilled professionals. Staff members range from maintenance workers to engineers, groundskeepers and security personnel. Together, they handle a wide array of responsibilities and help the hospital and all associated facilities run smoothly.

Through it all, Danielle Colson, the department's secretary, supports day-to-day operations by managing invoices and bills and performing other administrative tasks. Her work keeps the department organized.



Director James Frauendorfer and department secretary Danielle Colson review billing and invoices to maintain accuracy and financial clarity.

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**James Frauendorfer**

Facilities management director at Columbus Community Hospital



Maintenance engineers Jerrad Swanson and Mitchell Ehmke test the hospital's electrical panel.

## Hands-on maintenance

Plant operations handles a wide range of maintenance tasks every day. Team members replace light bulbs, unclog sinks and toilets and perform paint touch-ups to keep facilities welcoming. They inspect and repair wheelchairs and transport chairs so patients can move safely throughout the hospital. They also maintain hot-water filters and other vital building systems, preventing equipment failures before they happen.

"The amount of equipment it takes to keep the building running effectively is significant," Frauendorfer said. "We need to make sure emergency equipment is operational, and that parking lots and sidewalks are safe in bad weather for patients and visitors. Every detail matters, from the smallest bulb to the largest system."

## Safety and compliance

The process of keeping facilities safe requires constant attention. Plant operations staff members inspect areas above ceilings; seal penetrations in fire-rated walls; and check sprinkler systems, piping and cabling. These inspections prevent small issues from becoming serious problems and make certain that the hospital is in compliance with Joint Commission standards.

"These details may not be visible, but they are crucial for safety," Frauendorfer said. "Compliance is a top priority for every project we take on. Patients and staff rely on these systems every day, and we take that responsibility seriously."

The team's work goes beyond equipment and systems. Team members keep entrances, parking lots and walkways safe, even during snow or ice. They monitor emergency exits, check signage and verify lighting in critical areas. These measures all contribute to the overall safety and accessibility of the hospital and off-site facilities.

## Communication and workflow

Efficiency is essential in a busy health care environment. Plant operations recently implemented a new work order system that strengthens communication and workflow. A tracking board allows staff to monitor active requests, follow progress and keep other departments informed about ongoing projects.

"By communicating work progress effectively and in a timely manner, we collaborate better across the hospital and all our off-site locations," Frauendorfer said. "It keeps everyone on the same page and ensures projects are completed

successfully. Good communication is just as important as the maintenance itself."

## Collaboration and motivation

Plant operations frequently works with vendors, contractors and internal staff to complete projects. Every task, large or small, requires collaboration and coordination. Team members say they are inspired by seeing a project come together.

"What motivates our team most is achieving a successful outcome on projects we've collaborated on," Frauendorfer said. "It's satisfying to know our work makes the hospital safer and more efficient. Every project is a chance to solve a problem and make a difference."

For the plant operations team, each day brings new challenges, collaborations and opportunities for problem-solving. The team members' dedication allows patient care to continue safely, efficiently and without interruption.



Maintenance engineer Robert Sandifer inspects above the hospital's ceilings.