

Inspection versus Preventative Maintenance

Regardless of what type of operation you have, if you have made an investment in equipment, critical to your operation, you hope and pray you don't suffer from a surprise period of down time. Down time being a situation in which your machine is inoperable and unable to do its role within the scope of your operation.

Hoping for little or no down time is a nice thought, but it is far from reality. Sooner or later every machine will fail. Sometimes they give you subtle warning, which are often ignored; other times they just go out on their own terms. It is inevitable.

What do most operators do to cope with this eventuality? Most typically do nothing. When a machine breaks, they pick up the phone and hope for the best. They hope we are not too busy. They hope it is something simple. They hope, if it needs parts, that we have the parts in stock. They hope if we have to order parts our vendor will have it. Etc., etc.

If it is not a mission critical machine, maybe a hope and a prayer will see you through the crisis.

This might come as a surprise but we don't like when our machines or your machines, as it were, are completely down. Especially when it's a bakery oven, a dishwasher or something where you only have one machine dedicated to an important task. We like to take care of problems ahead of time before they affect your bottom line.

Some business takes a more proactive approach. They will call us and schedule an appointment for either an inspection or a more in-depth preventative maintenance call.

An inspection is more informal. We come out and basically check over the machine for proper operation and check safety devices if applicable. We operate it. Test it. Visibly inspect. Take readings. We are looking for trouble before it occurs. If we find issues, we discuss them and what we recommend.

Many of our customers have service contracts which cover parts, labor and travel time for repairs due to machine breakage during normal days and hours. Despite the fact that you have this coverage, the coverage is after the fact. An inspection for a piece of equipment under contract would be chargeable, but anything we proactively find would be repaired under the contract.

The preventative maintenance call is similar to the inspection, but for most machines we have a check list to go through that lists things to be checked, setting to be made, lubrication and adjustments to be done. It is taking care of the things that the operator's manual suggests the customer do, on an ongoing basis, that never gets done. This too would be chargeable under contract, but as you can see, it is aimed at preventing catastrophic down time.

So when it comes to break downs, there are three options on how to deal with them:

- Roll the dice and hope for the best

- Be proactive and have an inspection, where we look for potential trouble
- Be proactive by having preventative maintenance done, where we look for trouble and attempt to prevent it by keeping up with recommended maintenance procedures

We don't like break downs, any more than you; believe it or not.