

Chris's Corner: When should I call for service?

You have equipment. You have made an investment in it and hopefully the equipment contributes to your operation's productivity and profitability.

Something isn't just right with a machine, when should you call for service?

In a perfect world, it would be an open and shut case. Whenever your machine is not functioning properly, is making unusual sounds or a piece of it is obviously broken, you would simply call.

However, as the cliché says, money doesn't grow on trees. You have to measure the severity of the issue versus the investment to get a repair.

Let me try to help.

If your machine is under the manufacturer's warranty and something seems to be wrong with it, place a call. Describe the issue to the person taking the call and if you have any doubts, ask if the problem seems as if it would be covered under warranty.

By and large, most issues with machines less than a year old would be covered under warranty. Most manufacturers' cover parts, labor and travel to repair their machines within the first year of ownership.

Some exceptions to the rule might be breakage, such as dropping all or part of the machine. Neglect, such as not following customer maintenance procedures such as cleaning, adjusting or lubricating would not be covered. Abuse by overloading or overusing based upon the maker's owner manual would be chargeable as well.

To a large degree these situations while common typically do not result in machine break downs within the first year of ownership. They will eventually lead to breakdown, premature failure and a short span of ownership not too long after the first year however.

So if it is under warranty and you think you have a problem, call, and at least ask.

If the machine is under a service contract that covers parts, labor and travel for the term of the contract, this is basically an extended warranty. Although your machine maybe well over one year old the same overage and, more importantly, the same exceptions may apply.

If you haven't lubricated your machine for quite a long time and something wears out, depending upon the obviousness of your neglect, it might not be covered under the contract. That said, if you've purchased a contract, take full advantage of it and place a call whenever anything is wrong with your machine. There is no reason to put it off. If it is a small problem, just say so and the servicer will take care of it sometime when they're in your neighborhood.

Warranty and service contract service calls are sort of no brainers. If you have a problem, place a call. However, it is not so simple when you are paying for parts, labor and travel time on a chargeable service call.

When should you call?

- You should call when your employee's safety is at risk.
- You should call when taking care of a small problem will prevent a larger more expensive problem. You have a leak, you take care of it. You ignore it and it shorts out your motor.

How can you save money smartly?

- Group two or three small problems together so as to only pay for one trip charge.
- Have a list of small problems available so that when you have a serious problem you have can have them looked at as well and, once again, save a trip charge.
- Save small chargeable calls until you have a warranty or contract call and save a trip. If you try and scam on this you will eventually be found out for crying wolf and when you have a real serious issue you might be put off because you've tried to scam your servicer. Real world here folks.

If in doubt get an estimate from your servicer about anticipated costs. Always weigh the cost of repair versus the cost of replacement. As an example, those small commercial microwaves can be repaired but often times it is cheaper to replace in most instances where the machine is out of warranty.

The biggest money saving tip of all is to keep on top of your small problems and make sure that, hopefully, sooner than later you take care of them. Most big dollar repairs started out as small repairs that were ignored. Nothing ever goes away on its own and if it does, it tends to come back way worse. Machines are not the human body, they can't heal themselves.