

Equipment Maintenance

Keeping Up on the Small Things

by Eddie Garcia, territory sales manager, Roofmaster Products

Everybody dislikes cleaning, doing windows, cleaning floors, toilets, etc. When it comes to maintenance of equipment, most want to say, "That's not my job." But, unfortunately, maintenance is everyone's job, or it should be. Why? Because if you don't treat your equipment properly and give it good, regular maintenance, it will eventually let you down, fail to perform, and cause delays on the job that will cost you and your crews money.

Starting with tankers and kettles, they need regular cleaning of the tubes and pump system. Coke builds up in the vat slowing circulation causing hot and cold spots. Eventually there is decreased pumping output that lowers efficiency of the rig. Over a long period of no maintenance coke builds up around corners again causing cold spots and poor heating efficiencies thus using more propane raising operating costs. Eventually tubes crack which will cause major costs to overhaul. Many contractors will not clean kettles for five to six years, or longer. When they find out cleaning and repair costs they're shocked. An average well-used kettle should have regular maintenance and be cleaned every 12-18 months for optimum performance and longevity. Tankers probably every 18-24 months.

Feltlayers, mop carts, and other hot dispensing equipment is done on an as-needed basis. Keep tires cleaned regularly and consider replacing pneumatic tires with non-flat filled tires. This applies to all on-deck equipment.

Powered Roof saws will perform best if all areas of the engine are blown out with compressed air about once per hour. No matter how efficient the machine, debris builds up in the engine cooling vanes and when air-flow is restricted the engines heat up and prematurely fail. Keep them clean and

they'll give you many years of good performance. It is highly suggested to change the oil and coolant (if included) daily. Performing this will definitely extend the life of the engine. Also, be sure when you replace the carbide blades, you pay attention to the direction of the rotation of the blade. Most companies place arrows to show the direction the blade should rotate. You'd be amazed at how many blades are put in backwards, causing the non-carbide side of the blade to hit first, instead of the carbide side.

Roof spray rigs will give you many years of excellent performance as long as they're treated with respect. All spray rigs (pumps) have ball check valves and seals in them. Daily cleaning of the rig and hoses make them perform for a very long time. Follow the manufacturers' directions for cleaning solutions for the type of material you're running through it that day. Flush your lines with water (for water-based materials) or solvents (for solvent-based materials) to push out the material, then clean with solvents or more water (depending on the base) for a system clean. It is also recommended after the lines are flushed you thoroughly clean the ball check valve. Flushing the lines does not adequately clean this and more than half the time it will freeze up and keep the pump from working properly. Keep extra repair kits on hand to replace the packings on your polegun so material doesn't leak out all over your workers hands.

Hot air welders are relatively low maintenance, but not no-maintenance. Hand-held units should be inspected regularly, especially for debris. Blow out the internal works daily with compressed air as debris can build up and restrict airflow. Restricted airflow will shorten the heating element life. Also, keep an extra element on hand so it can be replaced quickly and easily to keep on working. For the robots, clean the nozzle area hourly to remove all debris build-up. Whenever you turn the unit off, turn the heater off but not the blower (fan). Let it run for three to five minutes to cool the heating element down. This simple step will dramatically extend

the life of the element. Since a new element can cost upwards of \$350, you'll want to get all the life out of it that you can. Also, instruct your workers not to lift the welder by the power cord. Over 40% of the units we repair have damaged power cords for this reason.

Scheduled routine maintenance of your equipment will make you money in the long run. Equipment that breaks down or doesn't perform on the job costs you down time, extra labor, transportation costs, missed deadlines, high blood pressure, and most of all, lot's of extra money. Unfortunately, we all know how many of your workers treat the equipment like it's yours, not theirs. Try to impress upon them bonuses, regular pay, finishing the job early so they can go home early, etc., may not happen if they don't treat the equipment with respect. Treat it well and with respect and regular maintenance and it may make it through the next day or week to make you more money.

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