

5 Ways to Extend the Life of Your Material Handling Equipment

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Undoubtedly, maintaining material handling equipment requires an investment of time and money, however, the alternative cost for not maintaining equipment will be much higher since it will lead to the following issues: lost productivity, prematurely retiring equipment and the need to replace equipment.

Regular maintenance pays dividends as it enables you to extend the life of your material handling equipment so that you realize a greater return on your investment over its lifetime.

The following are five ways to help your material handling equipment last longer:

1. **Train Your Employees:** When employees don't know how to properly operate a piece of equipment, they may subject it to applications for which it was not designed. The equipment is more likely to wear out or require maintenance prematurely. More so, employees who are not properly trained can put themselves, and others, at risk of injury.

Training is especially important for preparing employees to work with new technology with which they have not previously had experience.

In addition to providing training, it is recommended that you establish protocols for assessing each employee's mastery of the equipment before certifying them to use the equipment on the job. Provide refresher training, especially when a piece of equipment is upgraded with new features or technology.

2. **Observe and Communicate:** Supervisors should talk daily with equipment operators to see if they notice any changes in the way equipment is operating. This way, the material handling equipment can be quickly and proactively addressed so that issues do not get out of hand. Employee training should stress the importance

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of reporting equipment problems.

In addition, damage to equipment should be reported as soon as it is discovered. The goal is to limit the severity of damage so that repairs are neither costly nor extensive.

3. Follow Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) Instructions: When it comes to maintaining material handling equipment, the OEM knows best. Maintenance requirements may vary from one brand/model of equipment to the next since designs and constructions differ. “One size” of maintenance protocols does not necessarily fit all pieces of equipment.

4. Preventive Maintenance: A comprehensive preventive maintenance program can help you avoid unscheduled downtime due to equipment breakdowns. A good preventive maintenance program allows you to schedule downtime to service equipment and replace wearing parts before they fail and disrupt your productivity, particularly during peak times.

Preventive maintenance also helps you: 1) avoid the high cost of emergency repairs, 2) enables you to keep your equipment operating at optimal efficiency, and 3) pays you back with as much serviceable life from your equipment as possible.

Another dividend of regular equipment maintenance is maintaining good relations with your customers, as you'll stay on schedule and deliver as promised.

While it may cost you upfront, preventive maintenance will end up costing you less than running equipment to failure — to the point that it shortens the serviceable life of your equipment and requires expensive repair or replacement.

Well-maintained equipment also pays off in improved efficiency of material handling operations and safety.

5. Predictive Maintenance: A predictive maintenance program is a good complement to a preventive maintenance program. By monitoring use of your equipment (the hours and types of use it undergoes) you can better keep track of when service should be performed and when parts are nearing the end of their expected lifetime ultimately needing to be replaced. Monitoring can be done manually or by means of automated systems. Automated systems will provide real time updates regarding the condition of your equipment either through your computer or smartphone.

As a bonus, another option for extending the serviceable life of your equipment is retrofitting the equipment with the latest technology. New technology that wasn't available when you originally bought the equipment can boost its efficiency and value to your operations. A retrofit can adapt the equipment to new processes in your facility and extend the useful lifetime of the equipment for your business.

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