Tool Box Talk | Preventive Maintenance & Safety

Preventive Maintenance is regularly scheduled work which is conducted on machinery and equipment to reduce the risk of failure/breakdown. Routine preventive maintenance increases reliability and lifespan of equipment while reducing maintenance costs, downtime, incidents from non-routine repair work and the need for significant repair work. Preventive maintenance includes inspection of equipment, cleaning, and lubrication, replacing parts, completing needed repairs and maintaining equipment service records.

To safely assist with preventive maintenance, keep an inventory of the least reliable and most critical machine components on hand and replace equipment that frequently breaks down. There are many reasons why preventive maintenance gets pushed down the priority list, but regularly occurring preventive maintenance can help keep employees safe, stop critical equipment failure and help keep production moving.

Equipment used throughout a construction job — ranging from hand tools and PPE to fleet vehicles and heavy operating equipment — must be regularly serviced and maintained. According to OSHA's Hand and Power Tools Booklet, "Tools are such a common part of our lives that it is difficult to remember they may pose hazards. The greatest hazards posed by hand tools result from misuse and improper maintenance."

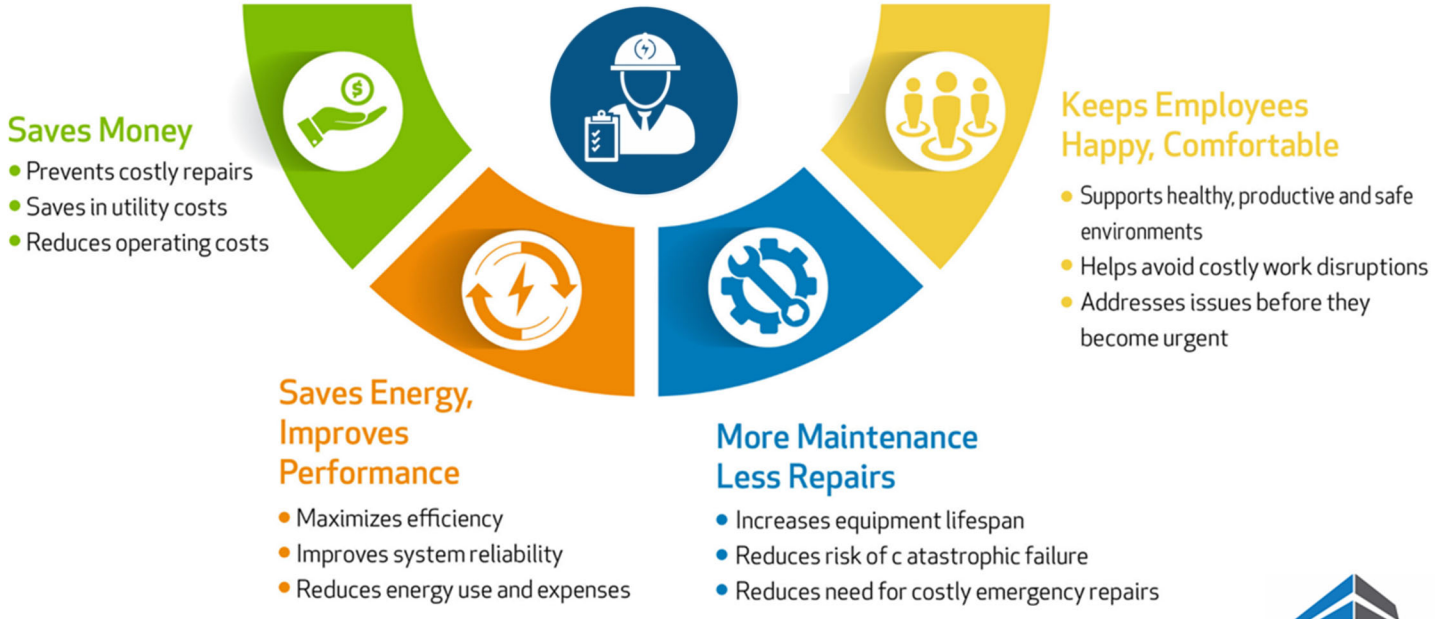
Studies consistently show a strong correlation between the amount of preventive maintenance an organization does and the safety incident rates (meaning, the more preventive maintenance performed, the lower the incident rate and, conversely, the less preventive maintenance performed, the higher the incident rate.

Though preventative maintenance is largely about adequately caring for tools and equipment, that is not the comprehensive scope of the task. Preventative maintenance also includes having supplies on hand to provide a safe work environment in all conditions. For example, are fire extinguishers in readily available locations and working conditions? Is a back-up generator ready to work in case of power failure? Is the jobsite fully stocked with salt to combat potential icy conditions? These are all considerations that should be proactively examined to reduce downtime and injury.

Here are some real near examples of root causes from actual near misses in manufacturing facilities for you to watch for:

- Tools and/or equipment not stored properly or left in the wrong area, interfering with regular operations
- Engaging in non-standard, non-routine work
- Placement of hands in areas that are not clearly visible
- Not verifying and/or completing all steps in a multi-step process
- Working without following standard work procedures
- Equipment not functioning normally

Ensuring employees are part of preventative maintenance is crucial to the success of a maintenance plan. Employees should always thoroughly inspect tools and equipment prior to use for issues such as low fluid levels, wear trends, missing parts, and other factors that could negatively impact use. If an issue is detected, employees should stop work and bring the issue to a supervisor's attention.



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