

Discovering "Abnormalities" During the Cleaning/ Sanitation Process.

One of the Pillars of TPM is the Elimination of Minor Stoppages. These are the annoying "glitches" or "hiccups" in the routine operation of the equipment. Experienced equipment operators know how to compensate for these abnormalities in machine performance. A little tweak here and a bump there and the process is OK. Often the operators are not aware of these compensating tweaks and do not realize they are playing the machine like a piano. These abnormalities happen because there are some little things wrong. Indeed, these are so small that sometimes the highly trained technicians in the maintenance crew miss them when working on the equipment. These techs are so busy with the major issues in the factory they rarely have time to deal with the minor things. They "don't sweat the small stuff" because they are often overwhelmed with more complex problems.

Interestingly, the folks who clean and sanitize the equipment see these little things but may not understand what happens when these are not repaired. In many cases they have not been trained to recognize the slight play in the shaft or the tiny misalignment of the bearing pillow blocks. The cleaning team sees the abnormalities because in the process of cleaning a piece of equipment they get up close and personal with it. Some procedures require the cleaners to touch virtually every part of the machine. What an opportunity! It is similar to what happens when we wash and wax the used car we just bought. During the buying process we examined it for major issues. However, when we wash it we discover the small amount of body rot up under the wheel well or the broken link to the side view mirror. None of these would have been a deal breaker but it would have been nice to know them when negotiating the final price.

The specific opportunity here is to provide the cleaning crew with some knowledge of what to look for and a method to report these issues. At that point a more knowledgeable mechanic can assess the issues and perhaps correct the minor problems during the cleaning cycle before they become major line stoppages.

If we address these missed opportunities properly, we may generate better machine performance, increased quality and additional output. Very often this improved performance translates into increased profits.

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