

## Mobile equipment maintenance



In addition to the superior performance characteristics of your workforce, one of the most important elements contributing to the success of the land improvement contractor is the reliability and availability of your mobile equipment.

Everyone knows equipment downtime directly relates to project delays that can jeopardize contractual performance obligations and adversely impact profitability.

The good news is that unlike the weather, equipment downtime is something you can directly control.

How, you ask? By keeping your mobile equipment in tip-top operating condition by developing, implementing and managing inspections and preventive maintenance routines. It all starts with you!

Initially, preventive maintenance programs can be a monumental undertaking but, once implemented, they become ingrained in your business operations and workforce performance, and you reap the rewards.

Luckily, most manufacturers and dealers provide preventive maintenance practices that can extend the life of your mobile equipment. While the manufacturers and dealers hope you return to them for preventive maintenance services after the initial warranty expires, most know they are less likely to retain your preventive maintenance business. What does this mean for you?

It's up to you and your workforce to keep your mobile equipment in tip-top operating condition until you dispose of it. If you consistently observe routine and extended preventive maintenance practices, you should benefit from the extended life of your mobile equipment. And who doesn't want to maximize the return on their investment in mobile equipment?

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### Here are a few preventive maintenance practices to consider:

- Establish and promote a management and workforce mindset of prevention versus reaction.
- Continue the manufacturer's preventive maintenance practices for the life of the equipment.
- Develop an in-house preventive maintenance and tracking program for each piece of equipment.
- Develop a pre-startup inspection policy and practice for each piece of equipment.
- Determine which equipment requires immediate shut-down and maintenance.
- Create pre-startup inspection and maintenance-need reporting forms.
- Train operators and supervisors to conduct pre-startup inspections to identify deficiencies.
- Require that equipment operators perform pre-startup inspections and document them.
- Audit operators pre-start inspections and mechanical repairs of in-house mechanics.
- Are there inspection practices specific to your business or industry? If so, Include them.

### Although each piece of mobile equipment will have individual preventive maintenance needs, here are some common items to include in your inspection list:

- Fire extinguisher – is it present, securely mounted, workforce trained in its use and is it discharged?
- Is the operator trained and qualified to use the equipment?
- Operator cab/enclosure – is it damaged and, if equipped, are environmental controls functional?

- Seatbelt – if equipped, is it in good condition and functional? Do you have a use policy?
- Any damage to operator controls such as clutch, brakes, leavers, stick, etc.?
- Hydraulic hoses – are there any visible cracks, wear or leaks?
- Hydraulic reservoir, pump, valves and actuators – are any damaged or leaking?
- Is there damage to any moving parts such as tires, tracks, bucket, boom, hook, hoist, etc.?
- Is the equipment beyond its prescribed hours-of-use preventive-maintenance schedule?
- Are the lights, horn and safety equipment in good condition and functional?
- Are the weather and job site conditions conducive for safety and damage-free operation?

Let's not forget about theft and mischievous damage prevention. If your equipment is stolen or damaged, it can be a setback for your project and a financial hardship for you and your workforce.

### Here are a few prevention questions to ask yourself:

- Is your mobile equipment insured?
- Do you keep it insured to value?
- Do you have theft and damage practices in place?

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### Theft and mischievous damage prevention practices should include but are not limited to:

- Do not leave mobile equipment on site any longer than required to complete the job that equipment is needed for.
- Do not leave the haul trailer on the job site.
- Install telematics with startup and tamper detection and GPS tracking with active monitoring and notification.
- Remove the operators key and secure the cab and controls.
- Change the operator key, if possible, to avoid master key use.
- Install a hidden kill switch.
- Remove the battery and tire to immobilize the equipment.
- Use fencing and lighting to deter theft or damage.

As a closing thought, mobile equipment does and will fail, sometimes unexpectedly, but a well thought out and implemented preventive maintenance program and end-of-useful-life management can minimize the impact.

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