

# Maintaining your maintenance stock



THERE ARE FEW THINGS WORSE THAN A MACHINE GOING DOWN AND YOUR PROCESS GRINDING TO A HALT. EXCEPT PERHAPS GOING TO THE STORES FOR THE REPLACEMENT PART, AND EITHER FINDING IT IN AN UNUSABLE CONDITION, OR NOT FINDING IT AT ALL. THAT'S WHY EVEN MAINTENANCE STOCK NEEDS MAINTENANCE.

When a machine breaks down, getting it repaired and running again quickly is obviously crucial. So you require critical parts available when and where you need them, and in good working order, ready to fit and run immediately. Which means an easily accessible, well organised, on-site store, full of well maintained parts in working order.

**Unfortunately, people who are expert at maintaining machines are not always so good at maintaining their MRO stores.**

You can hardly blame them. When a machine is down every second counts, and if time is already being wasted having to fetch parts from a badly located store, the last thing the engineer wants to bother with is paperwork to help keep the parts inventory up-to-date. But unfortunately, that could mean that next time there won't be a part; because he took the last one and nobody knew. Or, because the stores are so badly organised, he turns up another part in the most unlikely place, but because stock rotation is non-existent it has been sitting on the shelf for six months and is in an unusable state. In either case, an urgent call goes out for a replacement part from the supplier, and meanwhile the machine sits idle and the losses mount.

Sadly this is not a hypothetical situation. A recent customer of ERIKS was incurring an increasing number of non-conformance reports on motors drawn from stock, with premature failure causing severe loss of production. The reason was severe dust ingress because the motors had been sitting in the stores, literally gathering dust – unchecked, unorganised and ultimately unusable. After the situation was reviewed, not only was a motor health check policy proposed and implemented, but also a centrally-managed and clean storage environment was created specifically for the motors. In addition, the motors were fitted with shaft rotation discs, and training was given in a shaft rotation process designed to keep the motors in working order even whilst in store. The result was a total cost saving of £19,000.

Storage conditions can make an enormous difference to the stock you hold and its viability when it comes to be used. Ambient temperature can be crucial to some items, and too much humidity or moisture can quickly lead to corrosion of others. Rubber-based seals, for example, should be stored in sealed black plastic bags to protect from dust, moisture change, and sunlight, any of which can lead to deterioration of the components. Parts such as bearings packed with oil or grease also need to be stored flat on their side and kept wrapped to prevent contamination or leakage. And of course an efficient stock rotation system needs to be in place so that no part sits on the shelf for so long that it deteriorates.

Whether your MRO stores contain potential savings on the same scale as the above example – or larger – depends on a number of factors. But a comprehensive survey of your stores, stock inventory and stores management systems and processes is almost certain to reveal some savings. For example, if you are paying to procure

and store critical items, the first step is to define precisely what is critical and what isn't. You may think this is obvious. Surely a critical item is one which is crucial to the process and demands immediate replacement in the event of a failure? That's true. But whilst a bearing is a critical item, there's no need to keep a spare on hand in your stores five minutes away if it takes a day to strip the old one out of the machine. In that time you could have one delivered from a supplier and save yourself the space and expense of holding one in stock.

Similarly, what data are you using to help you define a critical part? The only reliable and effective method is an analysis of previous usage, together with the engineer's input and an expert's eye view of your machine and process. You may be surprised to find that some parts are less critical than you think, and therefore holding them in stock is simply a waste of money and space. Even some truly critical parts may not need to be held locally. **Condition Monitoring can provide you with a clear indication of likely time of failure, with a lead time long enough for ordering a replacement before it occurs.**

You may still need to maintain a minimum stock level for potential out-of-hours failures, but otherwise you can drastically reduce your stockholding and therefore your costs.

Even with the optimum stock in the store, it is still essential that the items are stored safely in the appropriate storage media, maintained in working order, used in the correct order of priority, and their removal from stores logged so that replacement stock can be ordered. This is when simple systems, easy to comply with, together with training for stores users, are essential. Depending on the size and complexity of your stock, systems can range from basic visual indicators (colour coded storage bins for easier critical parts identification), to the more sophisticated: Kanban and postbox systems for re-ordering, barcoding, or even RFID tagging.

With extensive experience in assessing, organising and managing stores of all sizes, ERIKS can help you to ensure your stock is kept at its most cost-effective level, maintained in the best condition, and is available as and when required.

## Solutions tailored to your needs

ERIKS offers a scalable range of working solutions from which you can pick and choose the best combination for your particular needs. For more information on any of these options, please contact ERIKS.

- Option 1: Normal Service Centre/Customer Trading Relationship
- Option 2: Profiled local Service Centre stock (standard core lines)
- Option 3: Profiled local Service Centre stock (strategic items)
- Option 4: Consignment stock (pay on use)
- Option 5: Vendor Managed Inventory
- Option 6: Vendor Managed Inventory with consignment stock
- Option 7: Bar coded Vendor Management of customer stock
- Option 8: Bar coded Vendor Management of customer and ERIKS-owned stock
- Option 9: Committed resource on-site – part-time, daily
- Option 10: Committed resource on-site – full-time
- Option 11: On-site team managing MRO stores
- Option 12: Fully Integrated Solution managing stores items, and responsible for all MRO purchases