

Behind the locked door...

THERE'S SOMETHING POTENTIALLY HIGHLY DANGEROUS HIDDEN AWAY BEHIND THAT LOCKED DOOR. SOMETHING POWERFUL. SOMETHING FORGOTTEN BY EVERYONE, EXCEPT... THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE.

It's your switchgear and transformers, and it's the hidden potential danger that's lurking in some forgotten corner of your facilities: rarely thought about, and even more rarely visited, checked or maintained. And though it's out of sight and out of mind, you can be sure that if it ever causes problems that won't be any defence. There may be no law that says aging switchgear needs to be replaced, but that's no reason to think you're off the hook – because there is a legal requirement to provide management systems which ensure safety and minimise the risks of injury.

Your organisation's Duty Holder has a legal obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act to ensure that switchgear (as part of the high voltage network) has been maintained to a suitable standard, and that it can function safely in normal operation, as well as failing safe under fault conditions. Which means ensuring that switchgear is inspected, assessed, maintained and – where necessary – overhauled, repaired or even replaced.

But safety isn't the only reason to keep switchgear in tip-top condition. There's also the fact that the switchgear is part of the power supply for your process or facility, and even a failure that falls short of a dangerous disaster can still cause enormous disruption and huge losses. Plus, if you have not been following – and documenting – a suitable maintenance procedure, any insurance for loss of production will be invalidated. Because the other people who you can be sure haven't forgotten about your switchgear and its importance are your insurers.

In fact, insurance companies are becoming increasingly alert to the possible dangers of switchgear – and particularly the oil-filled type still in use in so many installations. So any failure to carry out maintenance and document it thoroughly will inevitably



John Markall
Power Services
Contracts Manager
Digbeth Electro
Mechanical Services

be jumped on by loss adjusters as a good reason not to cover your losses.

Unfortunately, it's not as simple as whipping off an inspection cover and having a quick poke around. OHSAS 18001 states that there must be evidence that not only the operators but also the personnel who conduct testing are correctly trained and competent. But if your organisation has someone suitable on-site, you're one of the very few. That's why it makes sense to call in a company which has the expertise as well as the experience to carry out regular, thorough, fully-documented inspection, maintenance and repair procedures.

ERIKS Electro Mechanical Services, for example, have over 40 years' experience in the industry, and can offer you a fixed price contract over several years, to spread the load of servicing and maintenance and take complete care of your switchgear and transformers. The contract's provisions range from a routine walk-round and observation check, to an annual operation of the circuit breakers, a four-yearly internal examination, complete strip down of the switchgear and test. Naturally all the work carried out is fully documented, with complete traceability. Reports of what has been carried out, and

what further actions are recommended, are also provided, enabling you to build up a complete maintenance library.

The contract can also include an emergency response in the event of failure – whether that's as simple as switchgear or transformer failure or as catastrophic as a major fire that may result.

Whether your main concern is safety, compliance, reliability, efficiency or productivity, your switchgear and transformers are the key. So it's time to unlock the door and let in an expert, dependable maintenance partner.

