

## TECHNICAL *Corner*

### Spare Parts - To buy or not to buy *By Wayne Kochanek, ACS Enterprises, Inc.*



Ahh! Spare Parts - To buy or not to buy... A question pondered by many when facing growing attendance or aging equipment. Having a piece of equipment fail without a back-up can be frustrating and little Bobby never understands when there's no popcorn in his favorite combo pack. So... stock up on those parts and never worry about being without again... right? STOP! Breathe. Before you break the bank, fiddle with the VOE and completely clutter that spare janitorial closet you've transformed into a facility room, let's delve a little deeper into this quagmire and cool the buying beast within.

Here are some factors to consider when ordering back-up parts. Combine these elements to get the right equation that works for you.

**1. Know your machinery:** Document the model and serial numbers of your machines. That's right! Write them down before they get worn or scratched off the machine. Keep them safe, make duplicates. Your part supplier needs this info every time you order... so avoid being disconnected while you run back to the machine for this info.

**2. Organize, track, label and date your spare parts:** Why date? Well manufacturers offer warranties on replacement parts. Ordering too many of an expensive part and waiting six months to a year before installing will run the warranty out. Why label? Many parts look alike and/or can be rather nondescript when viewed away from their other components. Why organize? It's simply easier to find, track and reorder what you need when all the parts are separated by machinery type. Don't end up knee deep in a part you may only replace once before you're buying new machines, but if you already are, call your supplier, he may give you a credit for the returned parts minus a restocking fee. They will have to retest it and sell it as a used item, so do not expect full credit... but it is better than none.

**3. How do I know how many extra whatch-ya-ma-call-its to have on hand?** Look at age and number of like machinery you have. This will help determine the repair rate and part consumption. Although older machinery will need more work, a solid preventative maintenance program can reduce unwarranted repairs and excessive part replacement. Are you stocking up on

parts for no other reason than the fear you will no longer be able to obtain the part? Check with the manufacturer before ordering multiples of an item for future availability. No need to order 30 when one will do. One marvels at this logic - "I have 3 of the same popper... so I need 3 back up motors, stir shafts, etc." Revel in the fact that you have like machinery; this should reduce the number of spare parts to have on hand. In this day of fast delivery, if a part is used you can have another in stock overnight if need be.

**4. Idle or back-up machines:** Do you have extra machines not in use? Why have a \$400 motor on hand, sitting, losing its manufacturer's warranty, when you can afford to have a machine down for three days as the new part comes in. Let's assure your back-up machines are in working order with regular checks. Please avoid creating a machine grave yard, it's an eye sore. If you're using outside repair companies and not in-house labor it may be better to let your service company supply the part and get the labor and part warranty. What's best for you and your comfort level? Only you can answer that question.

**5. Shipping charges:** In this day and age most anything can be shipped overnight if needed. Overnight shipping can cost more than the part at times, but never let trying to avoid shipping charges dictate unruly overstocking of spare parts. Proper planning, regular equipment checks, and part tracking can reduce shipping costs. Which leads to the question - **When to order?** Check your parts well in advance of the busy seasons. Small items like retaining clips, check balls, etc... the parts that seem to disappear with everyday cleaning may need a healthy supply boost. Larger items like motors, stir shafts, agitators, and filters should be inventoried and stocked accordingly. If you use a part, replace it in a timely manor and your shipping will be negligible.

**Plan B:** Make a list of local vendors or company theatres that may have parts in case of an emergency when shipping is not available.

As always, if you are repairing in-house be safe. Understand your equipment and never guess at proper installation. "Quick" fixes and poor installation only lead to more repairs. ▼

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