

From the Inside Out

Jeff Dover

Preventive maintenance areas that are key for any restaurant

Facility professionals in our industry are tasked with setting up and monitoring several preventive maintenance services for their restaurants. These are the lifeblood of protecting company assets, saving energy, keeping repair, maintenance and capital costs to a minimum, maintaining proper food quality and reducing labor costs.

Any well-run restaurant needs periodic maintenance to keep their doors open and customers and employees safe. Preventive maintenance contracts need to go beyond the recommended maintenance as specified in the operating manuals. More specific, periodic, thorough maintenance tasks are required to ensure efficient operation and extend the life of the equipment. In this article, we examine numerous priority tasks that should be completed during preventive maintenance service:

HVAC/REFRIGERATION

- All equipment should be professionally serviced, at a minimum, every four months. In harsher environments, it should be every two to three months.
- Air filters need to be changed every three months, at a minimum. In some climates, every other month may be needed. Check to ensure filters are fitted properly with no gaps. Air will try to move through the gaps rather than filters, potentially damaging coils, fans, etc.
- Wash down (clean) coils every three months, and chemically clean them once a year. Clean coils will save up to 40 percent on energy costs, as per ASHRAE.
- Inspect belts every preventive-maintenance visit, and change them at least once a year.
- Keep condensate lines and pans clean to prevent odors and water damage.
- Check ductwork for any leaks.
- Clean make-up air filter.

ICE MACHINES

- Professionally service, at a minimum, every four months.
- Clean coils and interior of machine.
- Change water filters at least twice a year.
- Run ice machine cleaner through
- machine.
- Sanitize interior of machine and bin at least once a year.

ROOFS

- Inspect monthly or, at a minimum, every six months or immediately after a severe storm.
- Remove all debris.
- Clean out all drains for proper water flow.
- Walk around the roof perimeter to check sheet metal copings for any potential leak areas.

- Check all roof-to-wall connections for proper adherence.
- If required, caulk all pipe/ductwork penetrations.
- Clean up all grease and investigate source. Determine plan to eliminate.
- Perform overall assessment with photos for budgeting purposes.

GREASE TRAPS

- Install screens on all back-of-house floor drains.
- Scrape leftover food into trash containers, not down drains.
- Install screen baskets on sink drain lines.
- Avoid dumping hot liquids down drains.
- Ensure high-temperature dish machines are not piped to the trap.
- Do not use garbage disposals.
- Have the trap professionally serviced as required by local codes, which is usually every three months.
- Completely evacuate and visually inspect the tank.
- Refill tank to proper level.
- Manager on Duty should be shown clean tank.
- Ensure the pumping manifests are completed accurately. Send copies to appropriate personal and local agency.

HOT SIDE EQUIPMENT

- Perform preventive maintenance every six months.
- Inspect all electrical connections and components.
- Inspect all gas service and components.
- Check operation controls.
- Run through a cycle for normal operation.
- Check frypot conditions.
- Clean burner orifices.
- Clean/change filters as necessary.
- Descale hot water using equipment (e.g., steamers, boilers and dish machines) on a regular basis at a minimum of three times a year. In areas with high water hardness, this may need to be increased to every month. Failure to de-lime could increase energy use by up to 300 percent.
- Check overall condition of the equipment cabinet, operating surfaces, vents, etc.

HOOD CLEANING

- Kitchen exhaust system cleaning must be done at a minimum every three months. Increased frequency is required if solid fuel (wood) is being burned underneath the hood.
- Use only professional, certified hood cleaners with proper and up-to-date insurance.
- Always get before-and-after photos from the hood cleaner that show hood(s), ductwork, fusible links and fans. All areas need to be cleaned down to bare metal. All areas around the exhaust fan(s) on the roof need to show satisfactory cleaning.

- Always receive a report detailing the work completed and any cleaning issues encountered, e.g., long inaccessible duct runs that may need access panels installed.
- The contractor must provide a sticker (or certificate) showing date of cleaning, name of service company and area(s) not cleaned.
- Ensure there are no gaps between hood filters. Replace with proper size if needed.

FIRE SUPPRESSION

- Professionally inspect every six months.
- Inspect entire fire suppression system (Ansul) in the hood for proper operation.
- Replace fusible links and nozzles as required.
- Inspect and recharge, if necessary, all portable extinguishers.
- Inspect all emergency exit lights.

PLUMBING/IRRIGATION

- Ensure all floor drains are free of debris and have locking covers in place.
- Have back-of-house floor drain lines professionally jetted or snaked at least once a year to prevent backups.
- For the irrigation spring start up, check to ensure the date and time are correct and the start/stop times are programmed properly. Check on battery backup if applicable. Check for proper sprinkler head operation, cleaning out any dirt or obstruction. Replace broke or worn heads. In the fall, have the system vacated to minimize freezing and reprogram for non-operation.

These are the high-priority items to complete for the above areas. For a complete preventive maintenance listing on HVAC/R, fire suppression (including fire extinguishers), grease-trap pumping and hood cleaning, check out the RFMA website. Go to Resource Library, and then click on Facilities Toolkit.

I'm always looking for feedback. Feel free to contact me at jeff@rfmaonline.com or call at (972) 805-0905, extension 3.

Dover and out!

Jeff Dover's facilities career started in 1985. He has been employed by several major chains (Ponderosa, Steak & Ale, Bennigan's, TGI Friday's, Fuddruckers and recently Five Guys Burgers and Fries). His technical education enabled him to take the lead as Energy Manager, Facilities Manager and Director of Facilities at the various brands.