

Safe and SOUND

Keith McCuen

Reduce safe costs by 45 percent with 7 simple steps

It's 11 p.m., and one of your restaurants is ready to close, but the employees can't open the safe. Apparently, it needs service or repairs.

As any facility manager knows, repairing a broken safe is expensive in both money and time. The first hour can cost \$225 and often doubles after hours. Then there are the soft costs of managers/employees spending hours trying to coordinate a safe repair, business interruption and increased risk to unprotected assets. There is a better way.

Get Proactive

The majority of expensive safe repairs are completely preventable through a preventive maintenance program. Below are 7 simple steps that lower cost of safe ownership by 45 percent.

1. Change the batteries often

Fresh batteries are the most simple and critical component to preventive safe maintenance. When a safe fails, replacing the batteries is either the solution itself or the first essential step in troubleshooting. Not changing batteries on a regular schedule means that you will either pay a technician a hefty amount just to change the battery or pay soft costs in managers leaving the restaurant to purchase cheap batteries at a nearby store.

It is important to change batteries according to a defined maintenance schedule to prevent battery failure. Replace batteries only with high-quality batteries as they are the most reliable and have the longest shelf life.

Schedule battery changes every three months if the safe is opened more than 30 times a day. If you are changing batteries more than every three months, an alternative is using a continuous power source and having batteries as a back-up. If a safe is opened fewer than 30 times a day, schedule battery changes every six months. Always pay attention to low battery signals before the battery goes out.

2. Check door cords

Door cord damage from an electronic lock is the second most likely reason for safe repairs. Door cords can get smashed into the door jamb, and such damage often goes unreported. If damaged door cords are left unrepaired, your safe may not open, which requires a full safe drill—the most costly of safe repairs. Drilling a safe can cost from \$300 to \$750 during normal business hours and doubles after hours.

Check door cords every three months for wear and tear. If you find damage, get it fixed immediately. Replacing a damaged door cord is a fraction of the cost of a safe drill.

3. Check the handles

Turning the handle to open your safe should be smooth and easy. Having to force the handle usually indicates a bigger problem inside your safe.

Safes are designed to have handles break off in the case of a safe malfunction to keep out criminals. So if the handle is sticking, this can indicate an issue in the safe itself and the handle may break off if untreated. Immediately repair handles that stick. Much like a car repair, the longer a repair signal is ignored, the higher the cost of repair.

4. Open and close the door

Your safe door should be easy to open and close. If opening or closing is difficult, this usually indicates that the bolts are not retracting properly or that the safe door is sagging on its hinges. Left untreated, bolt and hinge problems are costly because they usually lead to a safe drill or damage to the hinges when permitted, or even the purchase of a new safe.

To prevent door problems, make sure that door jambs and openings are free of debris like paper clips, pens, rubber bands, etc. Also make sure that employees or objects do not lean on or hang from the safe door.

5. Read the instruction manual

Restaurants are notorious for higher turnover, and tracking and enforcing code management on a regular basis keeps your restaurant secure. Don't solely rely on changing your alarm system code to keep former employees away from assets.

Always know how to change the codes on your safe when employees leave. While you're at it, brush up on how to enroll a new user, delete a user and change the time delay.

6. Anchor the safe

This is the simplest way to prevent your safe from being carried off by an intruder or burglar. Bolt the safe to the floor using holes underneath or in the back of the safe. In high-crime areas, use a security installation platform to anchor the safe.

7. Check your combination

Manual combination locks should still work if dialed within a half point either higher or lower of the target number. If your combination lock does not function a half of a point higher or lower, this indicates that your combination lock is out of balance and needs service. Service this immediately to prevent a lock out, which most often requires a safe drill.

Make safe preventive maintenance part of your quality control process quarterly, and you will reap benefits in both lower cost of ownership and increased security.

Keith McCuen is COO of Rolland Safe and Lock Co. McCuen began his career with RSLC in 1994 as a sales associate and moved up through the ranks to assume the leadership of the New Orleans division in 2002. During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, McCuen's leadership skills led him to rebuild the New Orleans office, literally from the ground up and beyond its pre-Katrina sales levels in a few short years.

Safe Checklist

1. Change your batteries at least every six months.
2. Ensure door cords are not getting smashed and are free of wear and tear.
3. Ensure handles turn smoothly.
4. Ensure door opens and closes smoothly: no sagging or dragging.
5. Clear door opening of debris.
6. Anchor your safe.
7. Check your manual combination lock.