

PLAN AHEAD



Winterhalter's MTR at Merchiston Castle School in Scotland

Having a planned preventative maintenance contract in place for your equipment could be the difference between a seamless service and a school lunch disaster

So, it's a busy lunch service and you're preparing for up to 1,000 children and staff to pass through your servery. But your oven fails. Or the dishwasher breaks and you can't wash used crockery and cutlery ready for the next batch of customers. What do you do? You pay for a costly call-out and disappoint or anger a lot of hungry customers.

Having a planned preventative maintenance (PPM) contract in place always sounds like a costly extra when buying new equipment or looking at your annual budgets, but it really can pay off.

"A maintenance plan is mission critical to ensure the safe and efficient operation of equipment in a busy kitchen," says Glenn Roberts, chair of CESA. "It's cheaper than reactive service calls and it keeps equipment conforming to its original specifications. Not maintaining equipment properly will impact on its ability to do its job, it may reduce energy efficiency and increase running costs, and will probably compromise staff safety, food safety and customer safety. A proper maintenance regime ensures due diligence and compliance with current

legislation and a maintenance contract will help you to plan and manage costs."

Bob Wood, director of DC Warewashing & Icemaking Systems, says it's a "false economy" to not have a preventative maintenance package.

"Over time your machine will not work as efficiently as it should, it will use more energy, water, and chemicals and your business will have to bear the costs of any breakdowns, service call-outs and replacement parts, not to mention any consequential loss to the business of having your warewasher or icemaker out of order," he says.

But how often should a service be carried out and when? The logical time for a school is, of course, during the holidays.

"For academic facilities such as schools it makes sense to pre-plan maintenance during a holiday period. This maximises the benefits gained from preventative maintenance," says Graham Skinner, sales and marketing director at Serviceline. "Ideally this kitchen downtime allows for work to be carried out on the whole kitchen including catering, refrigeration and warewashing equipment within one visit from one service provider."

That's the great thing about many service providers, that they'll do everything in one go. So whether you're getting equipment looked at once a year, twice a year or more, you know that you've ticked off every piece of kit.

"Maintenance plans usually apply to

"Warranty cover might be jeopardised by failing to have preventative maintenance performed by a qualified service technician"

“It’s cheaper than reactive service calls and it keeps equipment conforming to its original specifications”

the entire kitchen – all appliances and auxiliary equipment such as blenders – and every visit includes inspecting for wear and tear, making any machine adjustments, checking gas ranges and carbon monoxide emissions, replacing worn components, lubricating moving parts and changing filters,” says Barry Osborn, managing director of TWO Services.

Skinner notes that the frequency of a service depends on the school – how many meals you serve and how old the equipment is.

“Some caterers choose to act upon their minimum legal requirements however there is often some confusion among caterers as to their mandatory certification and regulation obligations within a kitchen,” he says. “In some cases, they

are paying for maintenance services not relevant or required often because they have been unaware as to the mandatory certification and regulations.”

If there is any doubt on your legal obligations regarding kitchen maintenance then take advice, says Skinner.

As a general rule, twice a year is an often agreed maintenance schedule, although quiet kitchens can usually accept once a year in line with the gas safety check, saving the cost of an extra call out.

“Regular servicing of kitchen equipment will ensure that any specific annual safety requirements are met, for example, gas safety,” says Simon Lohse, managing director of Rational UK.

Remember, checks like gas safety are the responsibility of one person in the kitchen to ensure these are kept up to date and booked in.

WHAT WILL A REGULAR SERVICE DO?

Barry Osborn, managing director of TWO Services, highlights the benefits of planned maintenance.

- Maintain optimum appliance performance.
- Reduce the risk of costly breakdowns by spotting and fixing issues before they cause a problem, thus preventing disruption to service.
- Prolong the life of hard working equipment, saving money in the long run.
- Ensure you are complying with health and safety legislation.

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“Your mains supply contains minerals that can cause limescale and corrosion in equipment that uses steam, which can reduce performance and cause breakdowns”



Falcon equipment

IS TECHNOLOGY IMPROVING PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE?

While servicing equipment requires skilled engineers, technological advancements could be making things easier, quicker and more proactive.

We've heard a lot about connected cooking – equipment that can talk to each other (particularly beneficial when managing multiple sites) and alert users to any issues.

“A full diagnostics can be conducted by connecting machines to a laptop or a machine can be set up to notify the operator when preventative maintenance is due, with a symbol on its control panel,” says Paul Crowley, marketing development manager at Winterhalter.

“Connected equipment goes well toward this. It means that operators can monitor equipment like never before and will be able to gain efficiencies because of the power of the data at their fingertips. These are efficiencies like reduced downtime through identifying components that are about to fail.”

Some equipment might also benefit from a specialised service rather than a general one.

“Most engineers who carry out preventative maintenance work on school equipment are not dishwash specialists; the bulk of their work concentrates on prime cooking, ovens, food prep machines, ventilation and refrigeration,” says Paul Anderson, managing director of Meiko UK Ltd. “The school will achieve best long-term value for money and get a much better customer service by taking a tailor-made dishwashing package from a dishwashing specialist.”

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

There is a school of thought that so long as you're cleaning your equipment properly, you don't actually need a PPM contract. Derek Maher, managing director of Crystaltech, believes PPM isn't required on their machines up to a pass-through.

“When we go to a site, we not only repair the fault but perform a mini preventative maintenance on them to bring the machine up to full standard,” he says. “The industry tends to be driven by key performance indicators and the major one we are measured on is first-time fix. However, what this means is that a lot

of companies will go in, fix the fault and close the job down to achieve their targets, even though there are still other problems with the machine. This can actually reduce the life of the equipment.”

The company says that taking this stance and doing a thorough repair on the job has reduced the number of call-outs by 20-25%.

ARE YOU AT LOGGERHEADS WITH LIMESCALE?

Did you know that 60% of the UK suffers from the effect of limescale? And that hard water is responsible for around 70% of equipment failure?

“Your mains supply contains minerals that can cause limescale and corrosion in equipment that uses steam, which in turn can reduce performance and cause breakdowns,” says Osborn. “Hard water areas especially will suffer from faster limescale build-up.”

It's for these people that PPM is particularly important and water treatment should be part of that contract or part of your ongoing maintenance procedures.

“Water softeners have a relatively quick payback time, so it's important that school catering teams weigh up the initial purchase price against the savings that can be made



Rational's service technician team

in terms of energy efficiency of equipment, reduced call-outs due to breakdowns and increased efficiency of service,” says Kevin Johnson, managing director at Monarch Water.

Think of PPM as an insurance against the breakdown of your equipment when you need it most. But it goes without saying that it doesn't replace the need for regular cleaning!

“It's important to maintain the cleanliness of your site and its equipment which will help keep it running efficiently,” says Donna Grey from Phoenix Commercial Catering. “Thorough cleaning in sites, particularly with fridges, reduces dust which can block fans and motors. Cleaning fridge seals regularly also helps to avoid seals from rotting.”

Daily cleaning of all kitchen equipment will make servicing more effective and combined with PPM will ensure the long life of your expensive kit.

NEED TO KNOW

With a preventative maintenance plan you get access to support by professional and trained technicians. “These technicians can offer fast, prioritised response and often a quick repair or resolution,” says Shaune Hall, product development chef at Falcon Foodservice Equipment.

However, Crowley notes that it is essential to define what is to be included in the maintenance contract.

“Ensure engineers undertaking preventative maintenance are experienced, qualified specialists,” he says. “Question what reporting there will be. There's no point conducting a preventative maintenance programme if the process is not 360°.”

Hall adds that a plan can be tailored to suit the school's needs and built into your operating budgets.

“Sometimes customers say, ‘I don't need preventative maintenance now; my machine is still under warranty,’” says Eric Leed, operations manager at Catering Equipment Solutions. “But checking the warranty carefully reveals that the warranty cover might be jeopardised by failing to have preventative maintenance performed by a qualified service technician during the warranty period. To protect your investment, put a PPM plan into effect the day that the machine is installed!”

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