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Climate Control maintenance is no false economy…. It's the key to efficiency

By Karl Lycett, Rittal's Product Manager for Climate Control

£480,000….

Is a lot of money! But that is what I was told it costs one of the UK's largest automotive manufacturers ***PER HOUR*** when they experience downtime on their paint plant. Your overheads may not be as substantial as the above example, but that doesn't take away from the fact that the old adage you hear in every corner of business and production is true:

Time is Money

Regardless of your industry and the product you manufacture, production downtime is a crucial performance indicator to monitor because of the direct impact it can have on your bottom line. More downtime equals increased spares/maintenance costs, taken directly from your profit. This could have been invested to meet more pertinent business objectives, purchasing new machinery etc..

When I speak with customers across the UK regarding their attitude towards climate control maintenance, it tends to fall by the wayside on the priority list and there seems to be some main drivers for this thought process:

"I will just fix a problem when it occurs"

In the past, the approach of reactive maintenance was seen as acceptable for most businesses. However times have changed. The key goals of any sized business are now becoming "increased throughput", "Cost Efficiency", "Continuous Improvement". Potential roadblocks to output targets need to be nipped in the bud and nobody wants to be the one in the morning meeting explaining why yesterday's targets weren't met!

The implementation of a semi-regular maintenance schedule doesn't have to be massively time-consuming. Even something as simple as a weekly visual check of cooling equipment filter mats or any system alarms can alert you in good time to call in the experts, who can then perform a more detailed review for you.

"My equipment is currently operating and I haven't serviced it in months/years"

The problem may be "out of sight, out of mind" for now but the longer your cooling equipment is left unchecked, the higher the risk.

For example, if a fan unit is in a dusty environment and the filter mat becomes clogged, this will reduce its effectiveness to cool the electrical equipment within due to a reduced level of air throughput.

This in turn can increase the enclosure internal temperature. As a rule of thumb, for every 10°C you increase your internal temperature, you halve the life of the equipment within and increase the likelihood of an unexpected failure.

"We just open the enclosure door for a while"

This is treating the symptoms rather than the illness. If you are having to resort to a tactic such as using large fans to blow ambient air into an open enclosure you could be doing more harm than good. Not to mention that this is a massively dangerous solution from a health and safety standpoint.

An enclosure's purpose is to create an environment in which electrical equipment is protected from ambient contaminants. Having the door open allows a constant stream of dirty air to be pulled into the enclosure. This will then gather in switchgear/connection points and can cause short circuits or block on-board fans which will result in damage to componentry, reduced life and possible critical component failure.

If this course of action is required it can point to the fact that the cooling equipment currently employed is not adequate for the installation, or it requires some level of maintenance to bring it back into working order.

A **RiAssure FREE Cooling Review** from Rittal is perfect in this instance as your local Climate Control expert will perform a short appraisal of your existing equipment, give you honest feedback as to whether the equipment is adequate, and also provide details/quotations for a service contract to suit your ongoing needs.

"I don't have the manpower/we have a company who does that work for us"

Many companies I visit tell me that they outsource their servicing to a third party, however I tend to question what checks they are performing, given that I have been called onto site because an enclosure is overheating!

On one occasion, I asked the customer to speak with his current service provider to understand what checks were being undertaken, because his cooling units were in quite a state of disrepair. It became clear after a short discussion that they serviced "Air Conditioning" in the offices and didn't even look in the factory…

Obviously this is not the case for all service providers out there, however climate control equipment becoming increasingly efficient, while new, sophisticated, cutting-edge technology is launched every year. The only guarantee of the highest level of checks and service will come from engineers who have been trained by the manufacturers about the technology and its detailed workings.

Rittal has been manufacturing industry-leading climate control equipment for 30 years and all of our service staff are highly trained on the whole portfolio to ensure they can remedy your issues.

Take the introductory example again and turn the spotlight onto your business. Everyone has budgets and savings targets to hit, so ask yourself, can you afford NOT to have correct maintenance in place?

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Ends

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Image
Pictures show:
fri100189800 - Essential Maintenance for Climate Control Equipment
fri182025700 - Essential Maintenance for Climate Control Equipment

Notes
Rittal, headquartered in Herborn, Hesse, Germany, is a leading global provider of solutions for industrial enclosures, power distribution, climate control and IT infrastructure, as well as software and services. Rittal solutions can be found in more than 90 percent of all industrial sectors worldwide.

Systems made by Rittal are deployed across a variety of industrial and IT applications, including vertical sectors such as the transport industry, power generation, mechanical and plant engineering, IT and telecommunications. Rittal is active worldwide with 9,300 employees and 58 subsidiaries. Its broad product range includes infrastructure solutions for modular and energy-efficient data centres with innovative concepts for the security of physical data and systems.

Leading software providers Eplan and Cideon complement the value chain, providing interdisciplinary engineering solutions, while Rittal Automation Systems offers automation systems for switchgear construction.

Founded in Herborn in 1961 and still run by its owner, Rittal is the largest company in the Friedhelm Loh Group. The Friedhelm Loh Group operates worldwide with 18 production sites and 80 international subsidiaries. The entire group employs 12,000 people and generated revenues of €2.6 billion in 2018. For the tenth time in succession, the family business has won the accolade “Top German Employer” in 2018.

A Germany-wide survey by Focus Money magazine named Friedhelm Loh Group as one of the nation’s top companies in terms of vocational training for the third year running in 2018.

Further information can be found at www.rittal.com and www.friedhelm-loh-group.com.