

Better Living Through Preventive Maintenance

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One of the best management tools available to small systems is often the one most commonly overlooked. When practiced, this tool allows for better time management and can often save a municipality money in “Oh My Gosh” emergency spending. This tool is, of course, preventive maintenance (PM). A properly developed and implemented PM program is essential to effectively

operating and maintaining your system.

Developing a PM program is not that difficult, but implementing it may create a challenge. Often the operator of a small system (one that serves a population of 10,000 or less) has many responsibilities. He or she is not only the operator of the plant, but also snowplow driver, sidewalk constructor and garbage man (excuse me, Refuse Removal Technician). The limited time the operator spends at the plant or in the collection system often leads to reactive, or “Oh My Gosh” emergency maintenance. How do we eliminate, or at the least, lessen the impact of these occurrences?

Selling the idea of a PM program to administrators and the public is not all that easy. Time spent in the plant or collection system is time away from the streets, or park or wherever else the operator may be “needed”. It also involves spending a little extra money on things such as lubricants, paint or line flushing. The monetary benefits of a good PM

program are not immediately recognized. But think of the money saved in overtime by eliminating just one sewer blockage by routinely flushing a problem line. Or extending the life of a pump because it was regularly checked and cleaned. Clearly the benefits of a proactive approach outweigh the expenses of a reactive approach.

Developing a good PM program is as simple as pulling out your O&M manuals (you know, those things on the bookshelf collecting dust). They contain schedules of periodic maintenance activities, as well as, recommended lubricants. Write down the recommended frequency of service and lubricants. Mark it on your calendar. Or better yet, if you have a computer, utilize it to schedule these tasks. There are many programs available to help schedule and track maintenance activities. It's not necessary to purchase expensive maintenance software. Most operating systems have a planning calendar included. Simply type in the scheduled task(s) and the date(s) you want to perform them on, and hit enter. The computer will then notify you on the appropriate date. The rest is up to you.

Follow through is the key to any PM program. Document all work performed. Note problems encountered, and use this information to properly budget for future repair and/or replacement. A good PM program is almost like having a crystal ball. You can foresee potential problems before they become problems, and work to correct them before they cost you more than they should.

If you need assistance in developing a PM program, contact NYRWA at (518) 828-3155. ♻️