Green CMMS – the engine of sustainability
by Scott Lasher, Maintenance Connection

These days, when someone says the word "green", they probably aren't just talking about the color of your sweater. "Green" and "Going Green" have become the buzzwords du jour for organizations looking to maximize sustainability within their operation. The move to be green is more than just a fad or buzzword, but rather a key component of an effective maintenance operation. A crucial stop on the path to sustainability and becoming "green" is in the implementation of an Enterprise Asset Management / Computerized Maintenance Management System (EAM/CMMS). When used and implemented to high standards, maintenance software can be the most powerful tool in your belt on the path to sustainability.

The proof is in the numbers: U.S. companies spend over $100 billion annually on capital equipment and related services. In terms of energy spending, that number quadruples to $400 billion annually, and that number continues to rise. In a typical manufacturing operation, the highest cost next to personnel is energy. Clearly, it is critical to effectively track and manage energy consumption to remain competitive, and this is where EAM/CMMS comes in.

Energy Utilization

EAM/CMMS provide several quality tools that, when used effectively, allow for more granular tracking of energy consumption. With countless levels of criteria available, and the ability to correlate those criteria to how much energy is being consumed, energy utilization monitoring is simple and detailed. For example, the ability to determine how much energy is being consumed for an individual asset, manufacturer, or Preventive Maintenance (PM) history is available through a CMMS.

The level of detail produced allows for better decision making, such as determining whether it is cost effective to replace an older asset that is consuming a lot of energy with one that is newer and more energy efficient. Imagine being able to determine that an asset from Manufacturer A is consuming more energy than the same type of asset from Manufacturer B. Replacing those energy-hogging assets from Manufacturer A can result in less energy consumption and greater cost savings.

Energy consumption can be logged and detailed using Building Monitoring Systems, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) applications and other specialized monitoring equipment that interfaces with the CMMS to create a tightly wound monitoring and corrective action system.

Condition-based monitoring is another important piece to utilizing a CMMS to reaching high levels of sustainability in asset management. Triggering corrective work orders, notifications, and even preventive maintenance schedules based on the level of energy being consumed is something that can greatly reduce energy utilization of given assets. These conditions are user-definable, meaning the level of flexibility is high. Minimum and maximum values are set, and based on those conditions, corrective actions are triggered. Condition-based monitoring is particularly notable in preventive maintenance. Triggering a preventive maintenance action based on a level of usage, like run-time hours, can greatly increase the overall efficiency of a PM program.

Going Green = Going Paperless

Becoming a more green and sustainable maintenance operation is not solely dependent on monitoring energy consumption. Moving away from paper and into an electronic platform greatly enhances efficiency and decreases costs. The cost of paper, storage of paper, creating an efficient filing method, and time spent filing are all greatly reduced with an electronic platform for the creation, distribution and completion of maintenance work assignments.

To be truly paperless, implementing a mobile platform is essential. With a mobile application of the CMMS attached to the tool belt of technicians and supervisors alike, the CMMS becomes easy to access and even easier to use. Work flow becomes timelier, as all parties involved have faster access to more timely data, which in turn decreases average response time to repair requests. Critical documents can be attached to work requests and accessed from anywhere, which saves the time and hassle of finding a document stored in endless file cabinets and binders of information.

Distribution of forms turns into the click of a button, and can appear instantly on the designated recipient's handheld device. The recipient can perform a number of tasks, including further distribution, adjustments, associating inventory, and even completing and closing the assignment with time spent, parts used, and a detailed labor report, all without ever touching a sheet of paper or picking up a pen. The completed work is stored as history instantly, and any data entered can be queried using the CMMS reporting mechanism. Time is of the essence to ensure assignments are being completed and any enhancement to productivity, while also decreasing on the number of trees required to do so, are all benefits of a paperless work flow through a CMMS mobile tool. This allows for machines to stay running and sustainability to increase.

Reporting is another area of a maintenance operation that can greatly benefit from going green and paperless. There are an array of features and functions in any quality CMMS that help satisfy the needs of regulatory bodies from every industry. As regulatory bodies increase the need for compliance via more frequent audits and required reports, the importance of having a centralized, organized, and paperless storage system for work history becomes increasingly important. JCAHO in healthcare, ISO in manufacturing, and Sarbanes Oxley for accounting in many industries all allow for the submission of electronic reports detailing the necessary compliance to standards set by the respective regulatory body.

Having the ability to query electronically stored data into an electronic report becomes a few key strokes, rather than a painful and exhaustive process of collecting and filtering data on endless paper into a comprehensive history report. This increases productivity and, because it is paperless, saves on printing costs while implementing sustainable practices. With flexibility a CMMS reporting tool provides, users can create reports from a myriad of data sets easily and efficiently, all while maintaining a level of detail suitable to relevant regulatory requirements.

For more information about implementing this type of solution using CMMS, visit www.maintenanceconnection.com. Or contact Scott Lasher at Maintenance Connection via sales@maintenanceconnection.com or (888) 567-3434 x1.