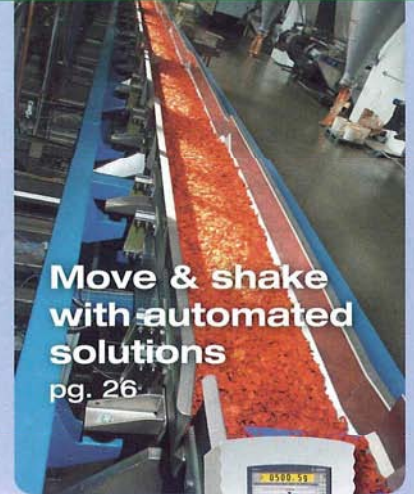


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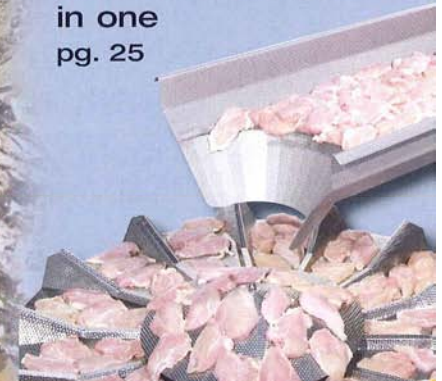


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Top Ten Most Costly Conveyor Maintenance Mistakes

Thomas E. Betts, Installation and Service Manager, TriFactor

Even though they depend on them, many companies don't give much thought to conveyor systems - until there's a breakdown. Then, a conveyor becomes a major issue - production stops, employees are idle, shipments are late, customers are upset and the company's credibility is undermined. Taken for granted and often ignored, a conveyor system turns out to be a critical link in a company's distribution system. Here are 10 of the most common material handling system maintenance mistakes and how to avoid them:

- 1. Lack of regular inspections.** In most manufacturing operations, it's the production equipment that receives the attention, while it's the products that are important in a distribution center. A conveyor system, no matter how basic or complex, is almost an "invisible" link in the total process. Regular inspections also serve to help familiarize employees stationed at conveyors to better understand the equipment they are using and to take ownership of its care.
- 2. Missing maintenance records.** While some drive a vehicle until it falls apart, most of us take regular maintenance seriously and the key is keeping a record. A maintenance log kept on or near the system with information on what maintenance has been performed and the date, along with anything that should be watched. This can be particularly useful in facilities where there are several shifts. It's also helpful if there is a change in personnel. Most importantly, it helps document the history of the equipment.
- 3. Failing to take the temperature of motors and reducers.** Motors can overheat. A temperature spike indicates that something is causing an overload. Having to replace a burned out motor during a production period means down time, particularly since most facilities don't have a backup supply.
- 4. Not adhering to OSHA standards.** A safe workplace can be a competitive advantage. Injuries are costly in time lost, the need to replace an employee and Worker's Compensation cost. In many cases, investigation reveals that the cause of injuries is the direct result of missing safety equipment.
- 5. Inadequate parts inventory.** As many learn, often too late, certain parts may not be readily available when there's a breakdown. While it's not appropriate to inventory every part, there are certain key components such as motors, couplings for line shafts, bearings and photo eyes that should be kept on hand.
- 6. Not learning from repeated breakdowns.** An ongoing pattern of breakdowns is a message that something is wrong. Failing to investigate and resolve problems results in more down time incidents, additional costs and employee frustration.
- 7. Failing to perform preventative maintenance.** "If it isn't broken, don't worry about it." We've all heard those words. Waiting to make repairs until a conveyor system breaks down is a costly mistake.
- 8. Using a conveyor in ways it wasn't intended.** A need arises and a conveyor system is pressed into service without consideration of its capabilities. One of the most common examples is placing larger, heavier cartons on a narrow conveyor. When this happens, there is stress and wear on the entire conveyor, which will eventually result in a breakdown.
- 9. Avoiding difficult places.** Wherever there's equipment, there are difficult places to reach. These are the breeding ground for expensive repairs and operational issues. It's these places that are rarely (sometimes, if ever) lubricated. This is where you find loose chains and sprocket set screws, causing extra strain on the system and creating an emergency waiting to happen.
- 10. Failing to train employees in the operation of conveyors.** One of the major causes of unnecessary maintenance costs is failing to train employees using the conveyors in their operation. They can become the eyes and ears for alerting their supervisors to potential problems. By knowing how conveyors operate, how to avoid their misuse and how to spot maintenance issues, employees become the first line of defense for minimizing problems and reducing costs.

For more information, contact Thomas Betts at (863) 577-2230 or tbetts@trifactor.com.



Reciprocating Vertical Conveyors

Company's line of reciprocating vertical conveyors feature counterweighted lift mechanisms that cut the effective unit load weight in half, thereby reducing horsepower and power requirements. Standard models are available with unit load capacities up to 6000 lbs, with a vertical travel of up to 100 ft. Load and unload points can be incorporated at any height, and on any side of the unit. This permits "Z," "C" or right angle flow. Lift speeds can range from 10-200 FPM, using either chain or belt drives, with the higher speeds made possible with variable frequency drives.

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Slat Conveyor

Company's Tri-Lane Slat Conveyor is designed to handle long rolls of material up to 30 in. in diameter and up to 4000 lbs. The conveyor features three abreast slat units, common driven from a single shaft mounted Eurodrive. The slats are set high in the frame. Rolls begin in the rolling equipment and are moved onto a weighscale conveyor prior to stretch wrapping. The index conveyor has a "buffer" of four zones. The conveyor is reversible so that it can deliver a single roll, or reverse to pick up additional rolls in consecutive zones.

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