

# It should last!

**It might be because I'm from Yorkshire but, if I spend money on something, I want it to last, so I make sure I look after it. I don't see that being any different at home or in an industrial or workplace setting, and that probably explains my mission to encourage our customers to look after their machines as well as they possibly can, writes Wayne Hunter, operations manager at Emmegi**

Every machinery manual – whether it comes from Emmegi or any other manufacturer – will include comprehensive routine maintenance guides. Most of these are basic procedures around cleaning and lubrication and come with simple instructions. If they are carried out in line with the schedules we set, they can make a significant difference to the performance and longevity of the machine – eliminating avoidable service calls and adding years to the useful life.

In my experience, when a machine is first installed, the trained operator will stick pretty rigidly to the schedules and all is well. But problems are more likely to occur over time when factories get busy – as they are now – or when a new operator takes over and they don't study the manual properly, which in a manufacturing environment, is not safe practice.

Poor maintenance and cleaning can have a direct impact on the safety of the operator; if they can't see clearly through a safety door they might miss alarms and emergency stop lights. That is something which no employer can afford to overlook.

From a commercial perspective as well, poor maintenance can prove extremely costly. When our engineers are called out to repairs and even for routine servicing, they see all kinds of failings which are entirely avoidable. For instance, bearing failure and damage to racks directly attributable to lack of greasing, broken pneumatic pipes and electrical cables caused by protective energy chains being allowed to become full of swarf which rubs against them, and valve failure when condensation isn't drained from the water traps and water travels through the pneumatic system and damages the valves themselves.

We also see angled machining heads which are overheating because they haven't been greased properly, limit switches which don't work because there is a build-up of swarf around the switch preventing it from making contact with the striker and swarf on the machine beds which can damage the material itself.

In automatic machining centres scrap conveyors are much more likely to fail and stop or limit the operation of the machine if they aren't maintained or cleaned properly. If scrap collecting bins aren't being emptied or offcuts being cleaned away, then collisions can occur with moving parts, and there is always a risk of overheating if cooling fans and filters are not being cleaned.

Obviously, there are safety constraints around any kind of machine servicing and maintenance. Emmegi guidelines clearly state that access should only be made when the machines have been isolated from the pneumatic and electrical supplies. Covers that protect the operators from moving parts are interlocked or secured with fixtures



**Wayne Hunter**

that require specific keys or tools to gain access and use of these should always be limited to authorised persons only.

At Emmegi (UK), we provide all kinds of training, depending on the scale and complexity of the machine, but that training will always begin and end with an emphasis on safety. We cover cleaning intervals, cleaning agents and recommendations on using brushes and vacuum cleaners rather than air guns because these can blow swarf into the machine and get into controls such as contactors, energy chains and switches. We leave behind the manual to ensure that the customer always has a standard point of reference to go back to and a clear reminder of our recommended schedules. Adhering strictly to these will always save time and money in the long run. □

[www.emmegi.com](http://www.emmegi.com)

# Don't call the guy

**Time, money and inconvenience: that's the impact of automatic doors breaking down. Imagine having an engineer on-site that could identify the problem and apply a fix in a matter of minutes. Strand Technologies has a virtual solution that could prove just as effective**

**V**irtual Engineer (VE) is a software solution for the control and diagnostics of automatic doors, gates and barriers. It is an online gateway which can be used on-site or remotely to alert and identify a fault and allow the user to overcome common problems.

The dashboard, which has been devised specifically for the management of entrances, links to Strand Technologies' iContact product range. Virtual Engineer offers two gateway user levels – one for non-technical staff who have immediate responsibility for looking after the site and another, more detailed interface, for estates and facilities managers which provides greater technical detail and remote management capability.

This latter option includes a dynamic overview to enable remote control of a specific set of doors or a group of entrances which link into the system – be they on one site or across a wider geographical area.

Virtual Engineer also has an 'AssistME' function. This is a press button facility which is located by the monitored asset and activated by the end user. Once activated, an immediate alert is sent to the site manager and/or the service provider to advise that the door/gate or barrier is not functioning effectively and that it is preventing access or exit.

VE dashboard enables fast and simple troubleshooting for the entire service team with 24/7, 365 day instant remote diagnostics and control. It can be accessed by any computer or mobile device and linked to specific emails to flag alerts.

Its benefits can provide:

- Accurate remote diagnostics, saving time and money for both customer and service provider
- Reduced carbon footprint by eliminating unnecessary visits to site
- Increased 'first-time fix' percentage via accurate remote diagnostics
- Improved customer/service provider relationship
- Better efficiency promoting excellent asset management
- Increased contract renewal potential through responsive and immediate action

Simon Bowden, sales and business development director for Strand Technologies, says that Virtual Engineer had been developed specifically for the doors and entrances market.

Bowden says: "iContact is a device that can be used to monitor and manage any electro-mechanical equipment linked to a user gateway. With our vast experience in the doors and entrances sector, we immediately recognised the time and cost-saving potential it could provide when applied to automatics.



**Simon Bowden**

"This led us to develop a very specific user gateway for this purpose, which is how we arrived at Virtual Engineer. We have made this easy-to-use for people working on-site or remotely who oversee access with a more sophisticated interface for greater levels of control for buildings and facilities managers."

iContact is a discreet device which is fitted to the entrance and 'talks' to the Virtual Engineer system to alert and identify problems.

Says Bowden: "We expect automatic doors to work flawlessly and the majority of those installed in the UK do, but commonly, user behaviour – including abuse and misuse along with environmental conditions such as rain, wind and even sunshine – can affect their performance.

"In some situations, this can result in time-critical breakdowns which compromise safety, security and accessibility and can prevent the business operation from continuing – at great expense and inconvenience." □

[www.strandtech.co.uk](http://www.strandtech.co.uk)