**Keys to Setting Up and Managing a Maintenance Supply Room**

In the past year or so I have worked with a few organizations that were or are struggling with the supply and repair parts component of maintenance process. As we all know parts and supplies are critical to maintaining a facility or manufacturing process. It doesn't matter if you are world class organization and plan and schedule all of your work or one of those organizations who are fighting to keep you head above the water's surface and everything you do is in the reactive and emergency mode, you still need parts to keep the process moving forward.

So how do we set up and manage a parts/supply room to serve our needs no matter what we do and or how we do it? The key components for a functional supply room, which we will discuss in more detail, are listed below:

- Adequate space to handle and store all of your parts and supplies
- Proper staff to manage the system and process
- Physical structures and doors in place to ensure limited access
- Security systems to monitor access
- Purchasing and issuing system in place which is connected to or part of the work order and asset management system
- Performance measures to ensure the system supports the maintenance process properly
- Audit system to ensure accuracy and validate performance

**Adequate Space** - Many organizations underestimate the amount of space it takes to adequately store the required amount of spare parts and supplies needed to maintain a well-run maintenance organization. This is a difficult task to master in the early stages of setting up a world class supply room but if you can capture all the current space you are occupying for all of you spares and add a little space for the future you may be OK. The key for the future is to keep the currently stock parts and spares current and useful. All the rest should be removed and discarded.

**Proper Staff** - This is a difficult concept to master. If you have a strict culture of documenting all supply room issues then you will not need any staff to be the police force securing the removal of parts and supplies. This culture is hard to find or develop so most organizations will need some supply room employees to manage the checks and balances for parts issues and
restocking. You will surely need a staff on first shift to manage the receiving of parts, reordering of replacement parts, routine cycle checks, issuing of parts, and maintaining an orderly supply room. Off shifts can be handled by using standard security methods to ensure only authorized personnel are allowed into the supply room. Upon leaving they are required to document the parts and supplies they removed.

**Physical Structures and Doors** - The physical space must be strong and capable of being secured and locked at all times. Doors wide enough to receive pallet shipped parts are essential.

**Security Systems** - There should be a security system in place to ensure management always knows who entered the supply room and hopefully always knows who removed parts from the supply room. This can be accomplished easily by having a supply room attendant assigned to the supply function 24/7 if it is needed. If this is not an option, then the room needs to be secured so all employees entering must use a key card or other entry means that can be tracked. Even without an interactive system management will be able to review how many times 'Bubba and Skeeter' entered the supply room and determine what supplies they removed. Compare the clip board parts checked out to the number of times they were in the space.

**Purchasing and Issuing System** - The best system is to have a purchasing and issuing system that tie into the computerized maintenance management system (CMMS). If this is possible, all parts issued from the supply room will be automatically charged to the work request. The ultimate goal is for all parts and supplies to be charged to the equipment or asset which will enable management to always know what the true cost of maintenance actually is. Cost of labor, cost of parts used, and the cost of any vendor or contractors used to repair the asset.

**Performance Measures** - Any supply room should have performance measures developed and published on a regular basis which will measure how well the system performs or services the customer like the maintenance organization. Things like stock outs, turns, aging stock report, obsolete parts, etc. should be measured and reported on a regular basis. *Everything worth doing is worth measuring!*

**Audit System and Process** - This process should be audited on a regular basis by performing cycle counts of all stock. Most organizations count parts of the supply room on a weekly or
monthly basis and over a period of time have completed a complete inventory of all stock. Discrepancies should be addressed and resolved as to why the numbers don't match.

As you can see, supply rooms are really not that complicated they just need some basic fundamental building blocks to ensure you set-up and operate the process in the manor that will add value to your maintenance program. Remember the supply, parts, and purchasing process is there to support and serve the maintenance/manufacturing/facility process which ultimately supports your final customer which is why we are all here.