



What to do After a Catastrophic Asset Failure

This month topic is one that comes up many times when I am working with organizations. It normally surfaces when I am preaching about the values of a proactive organization and how it will only be achieved by improving the preventive and predictive maintenance programs.

In the last month I was teaching a class in world class maintenance on the West coast and the topic came up from a seasoned maintenance mechanic. He said with all this world class maintenance stuff, which all sounds great. How do you get started?

One of the keys is to have a program in place where you will be able to analyze every failure. What I mean is whenever you have a catastrophic failure, one that nobody expected; you need a process in place to analyze the failure in the hope that with your effort and work you will be able to prevent the failure from happen again.

So one of the keys to improving the maintenance process is to have a process in place which analyzes each major event where each piece of equipment, that has a major failure, is reviewed to determine if the PM and PdM program has the appropriate inspections, checks, and maintenance in place to ensure the asset will serve the organization over time.

So then the catastrophic event occurs, what should I do? The answer is pretty simple but it takes some effort. The key is to ask the right questions that will prevent the failure from happening again. So what do we ask?

- What happened?
- What caused the failure?
- Could we have seen the failure coming?
- Could an improved preventive maintenance process have prevented the failure?

The next item we need to discuss is

- Do we have a process in place to ensure the problem does not occur again?

The key here is to have a work order and asset system in place that is capable of tracking all maintenance work back to each asset and by this I mean you will be able to see all work that has been performed on all assets.

So when a failure occurs, the questions that should be asked are:

- What happened?
- Who caused the failure (if it is known)?
- What is the last year's asset history?
- What is the assets work order history over the last year?
- How could the PM process change the failure?
- Could the preventive maintenance process improve or prevent the failure?
- How many failures or problems have occurred since the last preventive maintenance procedure?



The key to stopping or eliminating the catastrophic failure is to constantly be improving the preventive maintenance procedures. In lieu of buying all new assets every year it is the only way to move into the world class culture and hope to remove the chaos from the daily life.