



## The Value of a Well-Managed Work Order Backlog

Backlog is defined as: *a collection of approved work orders that you have been unable to complete or you have decided to defer to a later date for reasons such as money, lack of manpower, parts, work priority, or availability of equipment.*

The big question is whether a backlog is good or bad? The answer is... backlog that is properly managed and controlled is good! The reason for this is because when there is no backlog then all new work that arrives in the maintenance department is treated as *reactive* work. Meaning there is no or little time to plan and schedule your work in advance. Work that is performed in the *reactive* mode breeds 'Chaos'. A maintenance department that primarily works in chaos of the reactive mode is spending 4-6 times the amount of money (inefficient labor, emergency parts, scheduling confusion, etc.) they would be if they were thinking ahead.

For most organizations the size of the backlog should be 4-6 man weeks of work. This is calculated by dividing your total available man-hours into the total estimated man-hours of deferred work. This amount which seems high to most upper level managers is required to properly plan work, order and receive parts, and properly schedule execution. The backlog should be monitored on a regular basis, graphed and trended in order to ensure it does not get to big or to small.