

Predicting maintenance issues before they happen saves money

Moderator: Mark Heroux, Sebesta Blomberg

Panelists: Bertrand Ouellette, UGL Unicco; George D. MacNeil, Massachusetts General Hospital

Cost-effective maintenance in the healthcare industry requires cooperation between a wide variety of interests - including technical, business, and clinical - and must begin at the beginning. According to **Mark Heroux**, associate partner, Facilities Support Services, **Sebesta Blomberg**, the architect must understand how the building will work moving forward, individuals and departments using the building must understand and communicate their needs, and management must set aside funds at the outset of the building's lifecycle that will earn interest and ensure an ongoing predictive and preventative maintenance program. The alternative is a reactive, deferred maintenance practice that results in greater expense, and accelerates obsolescence.

Carrying transparent communication forward through the life of the building is also crucial. **George D. MacNeil**, director of buildings and grounds at **Massachusetts General Hospital** points out that during power switch tests, the Joint Commission will ask what the facility's procedure is in the event of loss of power. The question is good for maintenance people and clinicians. "In a healthcare facility, loss of power, or equipment failure, can impact not only revenue, but patient care." Everyone involved needs to have a good answer to such a question.



Maximizing cost savings through preventative maintenance, however, doesn't always mean maximizing service on equipment. The key is in knowing how much needs to be done to produce desired results. MacNeil said the scheduled maintenance Mass General used to do on fan coils took 30 minutes per unit. They now spend 10 minutes per unit in a much simplified process with no significant increase in failure. It's also important to understand that run-to-fail can be the most cost effective approach in some instances.

Preventative maintenance was developed by the United States Navy and was found to extend the life of equipment far beyond what had previously been expected. Now preventive maintenance is on the rise, but **Bertrand Ouellette**, director of business development, **UGL Unicco**, suggests that it's not a panacea. "A combination of 40 percent predictive and 60 percent preventative maintenance is the most effective approach."

Ouellette also points out that in the world of predictive maintenance, "data rules; feelings don't." Reading equipment performance is essential. "Use a variety of digital tools to generate meaningful reports and get them into the hands of decision makers." Such reports can help to manage inventory, improve constituent awareness, prioritize work orders and justify funding.

- *Tom Wallace*

Healthcare Building Ideas 2008 June-July;4(5):66