

[— Back](#)

## OPERATIONS

# Restaurant Equipment Maintenance: Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail

Share [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)

It's nice and quiet around your restaurant, with your machines humming along without a hitch. And then a piece of equipment fails. Be honest...do you make equipment maintenance planning a priority? Is your equipment maintenance log up to date? Have you filled in your restaurant equipment maintenance planner? If you're making a 911 repair call, chances are you've slacked, and now because you can't produce, your sales might take a hit.

No matter your restaurant's size, tracking your equipment's status in your equipment maintenance spreadsheet and EMP (Equipment Maintenance Planning) log is essential to your success. Your equipment is your engine, says Ray Camillo, founder and CEO of [Blue Orbit Restaurant Consulting](#), restaurant owners don't take care of their equipment as well as they should, and skimping on repair and maintenance is a big mistake.



"It's really important for restaurant owners and managers to behave like plant managers versus somebody who's babysitting a restaurant," he says. If an owner wants a pristine EMP log or equipment maintenance spreadsheet, put tasks on your calendar and record the results, he adds.

Be proactive, not reactive, when it comes to equipment maintenance planning and follow best practices for keeping your tools in their best shape. Don't leave it to chance and play a high-risk game that could hurt your business. Instead, follow this expert advice to create an equipment maintenance template.

## Who Needs to Pay Attention?

Owners and managers must watch spreadsheets, checklists, and calendar alerts to be proactive. Staff who regularly interact with the equipment should be vigilant in reporting abnormalities during operation.

Certain employees are the best in the building with your equipment, says Camillo, and you should know exactly who they are so they can help you. "They're quick to alert you, 'Hey, this fryer isn't holding temperature,' or, 'The gas jets aren't working right,'" he explains, "They're the first ones to say so because they're the ones that have to cook with it and they get annoyed."

A trusted handyman is also recommended. Having someone available who takes care of your equipment regularly, notifies you of what's wearing out, and can show-up in the middle of the night or during a busy shift to repair equipment can be the lifeline your business needs.

If you're a franchise owner, Lance Vaught, Vice President of Operations at [Penn Station East Coast Subs](#), says their franchisees are encouraged to find technicians certified in their equipment. If you have 15 to 20 units, he recommends considering having someone on payroll who's constantly working on equipment to not only maintain it, but stay educated on any issues

or warranty info.

“  
It's really important for restaurant owners and managers to behave like plant managers versus somebody who's babysitting a restaurant”

### How to Complete Restaurant Equipment Maintenance and Repairs

In the beginning it's easy, says Camillo, because when you buy the equipment, the manufacturer or sales person helps you understand the required maintenance. “If you have a conversation with your sales rep they're going to say, ‘Watch out for these things,’ they're going to tell you how to fix it. All you have to do is write those things down, then go right to your [equipment maintenance planner] and load it in.”

When you set up your plan, make sure to also set regular alerts that notify you. These remind you to check in on that troubled refrigerator or that it's time to grease your oven chains. At a minimum, your equipment maintenance plan must include monthly checks to record any needed repairs, says Vaught. And when you have a service appointment, he advises to tap into the wealth of knowledge of your service tech. This'll help you understand possible mechanical issues so you're able to self-diagnose problems in the future to save on repairs.

If you're part of a franchise, your franchisor should have specific recommended equipment along with a preventative maintenance plan, Vaught explains. This helps reduce cost of ownership while extending the life of your equipment. For example, if you have a griddle that your franchisor knows can last up to 12 to 16 years with proper preventative maintenance, it's simple to follow their mapped-out equipment maintenance template and get a great return on your investment.

When you've got shiny new equipment, it can be hard to write your preventative maintenance check, says Vaught, but, “it's even harder to write that check when you're in year six, and you're replacing major components of a piece of equipment; not for \$286 but for \$2,800. If you just spend the money upfront, you can save a lot.”

“Don't wait until the next time you have your preventative maintenance [if you see something that's not right] because that may be too late; you may fry your motherboard. It's not all that different than how you would maintain your home; awareness is critical,” he adds.

### How to Budget for Maintenance and Repairs

Camillo recommends figuring out the total replacement cost for all your equipment, divide it by five years, then set aside that money weekly or monthly. This can provide the funds for any types of repairs or maintenance you need done while providing a buffer from the beginning.

If you're a one-off or have a few locations, ask other restaurateurs what they budget, and who they recommend for performing maintenance and repairs that charge fair prices. Then, adapt their advice to your restaurant equipment maintenance planning. “Too often, we feel like we're stealing somebody else's playbook just by asking them questions, and rarely is that actually the case,” says Vaught, “Most restaurateurs help each other out.”

|  
[Back to Top](#)



Up Next

Restaurant Point-of-Sale System Features You Cant Live



# Without

[Read More](#) —



[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Statements Disclaimer](#) | [Sitemap](#)

Copyright © 2020 EMPLOYERS. All rights reserved.

EMPLOYERS®, America's small business insurance specialist®, EACCESS®, PrecisePay® and Employers Insurance Company of Nevada® are registered trademarks of EIG Services, Inc. Employers Holdings, Inc. is a holding company with subsidiaries that are specialty providers of workers' compensation insurance and services focused on select, small businesses engaged in low-to-medium hazard industries. The Company operates throughout the United States, with the exception of four states that are served exclusively by their state funds. Insurance is offered through Employers Insurance Company of Nevada, Employers Compensation Insurance Company, Employers Preferred Insurance Company, Employers Assurance Company and Certy Insurance Company, all rated A- (Excellent) by the A.M. Best Company. Not all companies do business in all jurisdictions. See [www.employers.com](http://www.employers.com) and [www.certy.com](http://www.certy.com) for coverage availability.

The information provided is intended to provide a general overview. This information is not legal advice and should not be relied on as such. EMPLOYERS® makes no warranties for the accuracy, adequacy, or completeness of the information provided, and will not be responsible for any actions taken based on the information contained herein. If you have legal questions or need legal advice, please consult an attorney.

