

Grow Your Commercial Business



It's estimated that 80% of the 14 million commercial door systems installed in North America don't receive routine maintenance, or aren't equipped with properly installed or functioning safety devices, such as photo-eyes or sensing edges.

Planned maintenance (PM) work is a business segment many dealers would like to grow. The stability of recurring revenue and the opportunity for additional service and installation work are both attractive. But, if you're like most door dealers, you provide only a small percentage of your commercial customers with PM work.

The reason is not that regular maintenance doesn't make sense for door systems – it does. We all know finding and fixing small problems before they become big problems is money well-spent. But despite this, door maintenance remains a discretionary expense to most customers, and as such is often deferred or not approved at all. "It's not in our budget", "We'll look at a PM program next year", or "We'll call you when we have a problem", are all common customer responses to PM proposals. The simple fact is that most customers wait until a door fails before they'll call you.

But what many door owners don't realize (and most door dealers too!), is that aside from improving operational reliability, there's another, more compelling reason to maintain door systems: safety and OSHA / OSH compliance.

OSHA Compliance Requirements for Commercial Overhead Door Systems

Overhead door systems fall under Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Health & Safety Act of 1970, the General Duty Clause, which imposes a standard of care on employers to ensure their workplaces are safe and free of hazards (see

sidebar). Section 5(a)(1) has been used as the basis for overhead door-related OSHA citations and penalties. For example:

"... overhead garage doors did not have a safety device edge, door stop sensors and proper signage."

"... two 14 foot wide overhead garage doors did not have a safety device edge or door stop sensors."

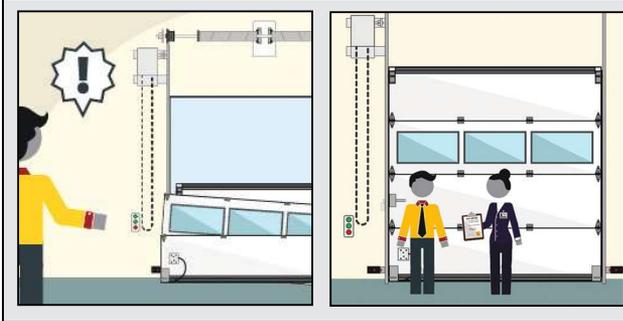
"... employer failed to ensure that the overhead door in Bay #3 was adequately constructed and adjusted to prevent it from coming off the track."

State OSH Plans sometimes impose additional compliance standards as well, and can be more specific about safety standards and practices. For example, Minnesota's Clarification of Minnesota Rules 5205.0675, subp. 2 provides specific guidance on how motorized overhead doors must be operated and equipped with safety devices to be compliant.

Talk to Your Customers' Safety Managers

Despite the OSHA compliance requirements, and the very real safety concerns that can arise when doors don't receive regular care and attention, most organizations don't include them in their safety programs. It's not that they don't (or wouldn't) care about overhead door safety and compliance, it's just that most Safety Managers simply don't think about it.

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Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Health & Safety Act, the General Duty Clause:

Section 5. Duties

(a) Each employer —

(1) shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees;

As a door dealer, this presents a unique opportunity for you to inform and add value to your customers. Safety Managers usually have a “lightbulb moment” when they realize they’ve overlooked a potentially serious hazard and compliance requirement, and often take follow-up action to address the deficiency. This is especially true in companies or organizations with established safety programs that are important to them. If you make a point to inform and educate customers about overhead door safety and OSHA compliance standards, you’ll be surprised at how much you can grow your PM business.

One door dealer that does a good job of this is Leduc Overhead Door. General Manager Jeff McCallum says, “We’ve found that many of our customers have formal safety programs, but almost never address overhead doors. We’ll ask if they’re aware of the OSH compliance requirements and the answer is usually ‘No.’” He adds, “This starts a conversation where we show them the specific OSH regulations that apply to their door systems, talk about potential hazards, and let them know what needs to be done to properly include doors in their safety program so they meet compliance standards.”

McCallum says this conversation often results in being asked to inspect and service the customer’s door systems: “Once customers understand the safety compliance requirements, proper door maintenance changes from being a ‘nice to’, to a ‘have to’. And aside from compliance issues, customers usually realize it’s just common sense to spend a bit of money on PM to avoid more expensive problems.”

“Talking to Safety Managers has enabled us to get PM programs approved in organizations where we’ve been previously unsuccessful” says McCallum. He adds, “We’ve put two new service trucks on the road and have also seen new installation work grow as customers make cost/benefit decisions to replace old equipment with new doors or operators.”

Properly Executing PM Work

While focusing customers on safety compliance is a great gateway to new business, dealers must take care to ensure PM work is performed properly, consistently and with good documentation. PM and safety compliance programs should meet the criteria below.

1. **All PM work should be done in accordance with manufacturers’ specifications.** This includes maintenance practices and standards, as well as PM intervals. If manufacturer’s specifications are not available, then PM work should adhere to established industry standards and best practices.
2. **Thorough, secure documentation should be maintained that details:**
 - a. PM work performed
 - b. Problems or deficiencies found, preferably documented with photos, corrective work recommended, and corrective work completed
 - c. The specific standards and practices to which the door systems are inspected and maintained (eg. manufacturers’ operating/maintenance manuals, or similar documentation)
3. **All motorized door systems should be equipped with entrapment devices to manufacturer’s standards.** If there are door systems with non-monitored entrapment devices, modernizing to newer monitored devices should be recommended, especially when the upgrade is reasonably practicable to do.



[1] OSHA inspection #314223140, Shelburne Fire Department

[2] OSHA inspection #314071929, Orland Dwelley & Sons, Inc.

[3] OSHA inspection #313525404, Cema Corp.

[4] Minnesota OSHA Fact Sheet, Clarification of Minnesota Rules 5205.0675, subp. 2—Overhead Doors



Garth Thomas is the President of Safedoor Planned Maintenance Ltd., the developer of SafedoorPM, an award-winning cloud-based software program used by door dealers to perform, manage, and successfully grow their commercial PM business.

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