Preserving Data
By Paperitalo Staff

Caveat--this column is not counter to our Housekeeping theme for the year. Don't use it to try to keep things that should go away.

Coincidently, several times recently I have encountered situations where data, studies and information gather over a period of time, sometimes called the "company memory" has disappeared to the detriment of the organization.

Now, in the case of old information, available in paper form only, this can be understood. In fact, keeping with our housekeeping theme, one might throw away file cabinets or engineering files of old material. After all, if it is not indexed, it is indeed worthless and might as well be tossed.

However, since at least the mid-1980s, or twenty-five years ago, most work has been done electronically. Shame on your management if there has not developed a central, searchable repository of this material. In fact, today, even the tiniest company can do this for pennies-- simply keep all files in one location. Back it up with one of the on-line services, which are as inexpensive as USD 60 per year, and then put Google Desktop on your computer (or something equivalent). Such programs will automatically search and index all this material for future reference.

In large companies with many-fold data compared to the smaller firms, the same thing can happen, it just cost more and needs a bit more planning.

The essential point, however, is that everything must introduced to the system and indexed using such a software program. I go into mill after mill where engineering and maintenance technical data is kept on individual PCs and never gets to a central repository. The vast programs that control the entire purchasing, financial and operations systems seem never to consider the value of all the resident technical data. Most places where I have seen these systems implemented, there is absolutely no provision for the engineering and technical information of the company. This is most likely because such systems were created by accountants.

You do have one department in a large corporation that knows how to preserve the kind of data of which I speak here--the legal department. This is a chance to interact with your legal colleagues--put them on your data preservation team. I like to see all departments get to know

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each other better and there is no better way than to work on a common project. Seriously consider this.

It goes without saying that good technical and engineering data is required to understand safety risks in your mill. Make sure this is incorporated into your safety training.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##

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