

A maintenance leader who wants to get out of the repair business?

Is he crazy?

Isn't our livelihood tied to breakdowns, repairs, and corrective actions? What would happen to the industry if everyone acted like Bryan Gordon of Transport Canada, who's responsible for the Toronto airport?

"We added a fifth wheel to our new fleet of tow-behind runway sweepers," Gordon says, "and removed the conventional tow bar." The result was better operator control of the sweeper, which reduced damage to the sweeper, reduced damage to the taxiway, pavement markers and runway lights, and increased safety because the sweeper can now be backed up with minimal assistance."

Also at the Toronto airport, Dan Butler saw an opportunity to get out of another aspect of maintenance helping the operations department. It stemmed from an initial design flaw.

"There are a total of 30 manual valves on the terminal apron that are used to divert glycol from deicing to collection tanks," says Dan. "The problem was that the valves were sluice gates, which required five to seven turns to close and also needed attention to ensure they were fully closed. It was difficult to know when they were closed and not over tightened. During the deicing season, maintenance was called hourly to attend to these valves.

"We replaced the 30 valves with butterfly valves, which require only a 90-degree turn to open or close. Now operations open and closes valves without calling maintenance. Service calls dropped by a factor of 20 to 1."

In both cases, a new look at an old problem and a change in component removed the need for ongoing maintenance input. I can't imagine that the Toronto airport will run out of maintenance work soon. Instead, maintenance has freed up time to solve other problems.

Most maintenance departments are under-crewed. Maintenance improvements like these help bring the workload in better balance with the existing workforce.

Executive Summary

Maintenance people's livelihood is associated with breakdowns, repairs and corrective actions. Bryan Gordon of Transport Canada, in-charge of Toronto Airport added a fifth wheel to the new fleet of tow-behind runway sweepers and took out the conventional tow bar. This made the operational control of the sweeper better, which reduced damage to the sweeper, reduced damage to the taxiway, pavement markers and runway lights, and increased safety because the sweeper can now be backed up with minimal assistance. Thus, a new approach to an old problem can remove the need for ongoing maintenance input. Also, most maintenance departments are under-crewed. Maintenance improvements like this can help bring the workload in better balance with the existing workforce.

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