

Quick Tips

Easy ideas to improve production efficiency

The Right Lubricant

Today's cars have everything at your reach under the hood. Putting the wrong fluid in the wrong opening, however, can cause you grief and big expenses. The same holds true with fluids in a framing production room. For example, air tool oil used in pneumatic staplers or point drivers won't work properly in most other machines. Light machine oil won't work in most computerized joiners unless they're Pistorius. For most American saws you need light machine oil, generally 5 weight, such as Pneumalube from Pistorius, to keep the cylinder(s) and foot pedal valves lubricated and working properly. For most European saws, a lubricant like air tool oil might work, but you need to get specific with most products.

The best bet is to consult with your supplier about your equipment. Then make sure each lubricant in the cabinet is labeled for the right equipment. Most production machines need some oil to work properly, but it has to be the right type and metered for the right amount. If there is an oiler on the intake air regulator assembly, it should be checked on a regular schedule and refilled as needed.

Using no lubrication or the

wrong lubricant in any machine can shorten the life of its components. For example, if you use ITW/AMP computerized joiners, be sure to only use the proper oil for those machines. The newer valves have no seals (which is a good thing), but they will seize up because of close tolerances when the wrong oil is used. When that happens, the valves need to be removed, disassembled, cleaned, and reinstalled. The wrong oil will also need to be cleaned from the air line system so the valves don't continue to be contaminated, causing lost production from down time. Using ITW/AMP # ATC-855 Lube & Cleaner will eliminate that problem before it happens.

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Contributors to this column are industry members who have experience in production framing operations. If you have a tip of your own, please send it to Quick Tips, PFM Production, 207 Commercial Court, Morganville, NJ 07751.

Draining Compressors

A compressor pump sucks in air, which has moisture in it and compresses it tightly in the tank, where moisture collects. If not drained, this dirty water can get pushed through the hoses and into your air equipment. Running dirty air through your machines is a fast way to seriously damage your pneumatic equipment.

Draining a tank is simple and should be done every day at the end of production, especially if you use your compressor heavily. If more than just a sprinkle of water comes out when you drain the tank, then you're not draining it often enough.

Compressor tanks have a drain valve, or petcock, on the underside that makes this easy to do. Turn the compressor off before draining because as soon as you lower the pressure, the compressor will try to start up. Also lower the tank pressure before draining or you'll blow water everywhere. And close the petcock after the tank drains or you'll overwork the motor as it tries to fill a tank with an open valve.

After that, check the rest of your air system for leaks, which make a compressor run unnecessarily and equipment operate improperly. Check connectors and replace hoses if they have cracks and bulges or are hard and brittle. Drain inline moisture traps at workstations and machines. If you don't have moisture traps downstream from the compressor, it's the time to install them.

Also replace the compressor's air filter periodically. Some compressors have belts that need to be checked for cracks and tightness. And while some pumps are "oil-less," most need oil that needs changing once in a while. Silent compressors have pumps submerged in synthetic oil, so check the levels and fill with the correct oil.

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