

LUBE

TECHNI-GRAM



FROM :

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Automated Food Processing Facilities Have Specialized Needs

Few industries have as specialized lubricant product needs as the food industry. To start with, the food industry is **big**. As of October 2004, there were more than 47,000 food manufacturing facilities in the United States alone. More than 80% of food plants employ 50 or fewer people. Pressures on production are enormous; example, the Snickers plant puts out over a million candy bars per day...imagine the impact of one hour of downtime.

With increasing levels of automation in the food manufacturing industry, **efficiency** becomes an increasingly important buzzword. Tremendous cost savings can be achieved in doing things smarter, faster and more efficiently. Industrial engineers continue to determine the most effective ways to use the basic factors of production--people, machines, materials, information, and energy--to make a product. With more automated equipment, a large portion of cost savings will result from making the right decisions about maintenance and proper lubrication of equipment.

“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” is a quaint enough expression, but food plant engineers know it’s not that simple. Comprehensive maintenance and lubrication programs can greatly extend the life of automated equipment and machines. Smart buying decisions that cost \$1.00 today and save \$5.00 throughout the life of the machine bring new efficiencies to the plant process.

Too often, excessive maintenance costs are looked upon as a cost of doing business, rather than viewing each piece of equipment in terms of “profit per unit”. Reduction in maintenance staff, or production expansion without maintenance staff expansion, unfortunately places many maintenance programs in a “fix it when it’s broken” maintenance mode, rather than in a good proactive maintenance program mode. The hectic pace to keep up with repairs can often cause maintenance managers to unconsciously avoid giving thought to improved lubricants or improved lubrication practices that could actually generate **maintenance profits**. This type of self-engulfing maintenance practices brings to mind a fitting phrase:

“Like the carpenter whose work went so slowly due to the dullness of his tools that he had not time to sharpen them”.



... to keep it running

A food processing facility that commits to superior performing lubricants and improved lubrication practices add greatly to their proactive maintenance capabilities, as well as assuring maximum “uptime”. I recall a General Manager of Equipment and Maintenance for a large sand and gravel operation describing how life without a proactive maintenance program was like not being able to see the forest for the trees. He compared the old way of thinking...“fix it when it’s broken”...to being like a Fire Department. “We were proud of ourselves when we put a fire out. So it cost some money, but we were up and running again in three days. What we didn’t stop to think was that maybe we could have been running those three days!”

SWEPCO’s H-1 Food Grade Lubricant Line, Cost Improvement Analysis (CIA) form and Laboratory Oil Analysis (LOA) programs are perhaps the best ways to prove SWEPCO’s added value and cost effectiveness in food processing operations. Maintenance personnel that introduce superior performing lubricants into their maintenance program can eliminate such phrases as “profit-limiting” or “profit reduction” and put the emphasis on **maintenance profits**. At a time when companies are looking more at the bottom line...how much did a maintenance program put in the bank compared to how much money it took out...SWEPCO Lubricants and Value Added Service Programs can certainly help put more money in the bank!