



SIMPLE WAYS TO SAVE WITH MAINTENANCE

Dozer owners can save on both operating and owning costs by following these guidelines.

When it comes to bulldozers, daily checks and planned maintenance are critical. Bruce Boebel, marketing manager for dozers for Komatsu, is quick to point out that every equipment owner has a stake in the resale value for each piece of equipment they own. During the course of ownership, it pays to properly maintain equipment and keep a detailed maintenance log to prove that the appropriate steps have been taken to keep that piece of equipment in top operating condition. When it comes time to sell, these simple steps can pay off in the amount of money the buyer is willing to pay for the machine.



DOZER-SPECIFIC MAINTENANCE

A bulldozer's operator's manual provides a wealth of information specific to that machine. When in doubt, however, an owner can always turn to the local dealer for more information. A dealer knows the equipment and can be a valuable resource, even if an owner does all of the service work for the machine. In that case, it is critical to invest in the proper manuals for the equipment. These manuals may seem like a large investment initially, but they can save an owner thousands of dollars over time.

For dozers, it is critical to know where all of the grease points are on the machine and to point them out to operators or mechanics working on the machine. It is the one that is missed that can cost the owner money, and that scenario can be easily prevented. It is a good idea to add this to a simple inspection checklist so that operators get into a repeatable habit of checking all grease points.

Dozer owners should be sure to keep fuel and oils clean. Contaminants like dirt and water can shorten the life of key components on any machine. It is critical to inspect caps, breathers, and lines for damage and to check for leaks regularly. If repair action is necessary, it should be taken immediately. Owners should also be careful when topping off or replacing fluids. It is important to store fluids properly to minimize contamination.

The undercarriage is the largest investment on a dozer. The owner or operator should make sure the track tension for the undercarriage is correct and that there is no damage to the undercarriage. If there is damage, the undercarriage component should be replaced or repaired immediately, whether it is a roller or some other component. Being vigilant about undercarriage maintenance saves owners a substantial amount of money in the long term.

SEARCHING FOR AN ADVANTAGE

According to Boebel, equipment owners should start thinking about planned maintenance when shopping for a new piece of equipment. Here are questions to ask when looking for a dozer that will lend itself to ease of maintenance and use:

- **Can daily checks be performed at ground level?** This

GENERAL MAINTENANCE CHECKS

So what does proper planned maintenance include for dozers? It begins with daily checks, which include the basic items, such as checking the fluid levels and greasing, per the operator's manual, for each piece of equipment. Also, a very simple machine inspection, checking for leaks, machine damage, and undercarriage track tension, can save an owner a large amount of money over the life of a machine. For example, a fuel cap that is damaged and not replaced immediately could allow dirt or water into the fuel tank. In that case, the engine fuel system would experience accelerated wear and fuel filters might need more frequent replacement, increasing operating costs.

Planned maintenance should start with checking fluids and filters to see what needs to be replaced or cleaned. All fluids should be topped off to their proper levels, and all fluids and filters used should be approved by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM), per the operator's manual. These machines represent a large investment, so it just does not make sense to skimp in these areas.

The next step in a daily check is to look for any leaks, leaky hoses, damage to fuel filters, etc. Daily checks should be an opportunity for owners to identify smaller issues that could lead to bigger-ticket repairs down the road. These checks are preventive in nature and should be treated as such. If owners can catch these types of problems early, it can save them a bundle in the long run.

FOR more
INFORMATION



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has two key advantages: 1) It is much easier and faster for the operator to do daily checks and simple inspections; and 2) critical fluids are more likely to get checked, which helps owners protect their investment.

- **How will the undercarriage be maintained?** Komatsu's models D31-22, D37-22, D29-22, and D51-22 feature undercarriage track frames that are thick, smooth pieces of steel without large, removable covers. This makes the undercarriage easier to clean and reduces operating costs, because there are no covers to get broken or require replacement.
- **What materials were used to make the dozer's hood and tanks?** If they are made of thick, steel plates, it could reduce operating costs because impact damage is reduced and additional tank guarding is not required.
- **How does one access the engine oil drain?** With the Komatsu Dash 22 models, for example, the engine oil drain is accessible at the front of the machine through an access cover, so crawling under the machine to change the oils is no longer required.
- **Does the dozer offer good visibility?** Look for features that take the operator's view into consideration. On the Dash-22 models, for example, the coolers have been moved to the rear of the machines to improve visibility. Good visibility has the added benefit of making a new operator productive faster.
- **Does the machine offer features that help monitor maintenance?** The technology available for remote monitoring is astonishing, and it helps owners monitor their machines so that maintenance is more likely to get done at the correct intervals. This reduces operating costs over the long term by reducing the possibility of a major breakdown. For example,

the Komtrax system from Komatsu integrates with the onboard diagnostics of the machine, allowing distributors to see what issue the operator might be having and allowing them to research the "fix" prior to checking the machine. This means the distributor is more likely to come out with the correct tools and parts to repair the machine the first time, significantly increasing uptime. (To learn more about the Komtrax system, please see our May 2008 article, "Critical Machine Information Makes Fleet Management More Effective," at www.moderncontractorsolutions.com/articlesdetail.php?id_articles=239&id_artcatg=7.)

IT ALL ADDS UP TO SAVINGS

A well-maintained machine costs less to operate over the life of the equipment. Not only will it reduce overall operating costs by decreasing the likelihood of catastrophic failures, but it can also help owners when it is time to sell that piece of equipment. Proper planned maintenance saves money in the long term because owners spend less on repairs in the short term. Maintaining a machine reduces wear on internal components, which is a direct benefit to the bottom line.

If an owner has performed proper maintenance on a piece of equipment and has the records to prove it, he or she can demand a better price at the point of sell for that machine. The receipts and maintenance log for each piece of equipment are valuable, because they allow owners to provide proof that the machine has been well maintained at the proper intervals.

Taking these simple steps can improve both operating and owning costs, and that adds long-term value to an owner's entire operation. ♦



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