

Management Firm Puts Preventive Maintenance on Autopilot

MAINTENANCE technicians at The Habitat Company are still responsible for carrying out preventive maintenance—they just don't have to spend hours going through written reports or checking tags on equipment anymore.

The Chicago-based apartment management and development company recently developed ProActive, a proprietary, automated version of Habitat's already existing preventive maintenance software that identifies what work needs to be done—and when—on each piece of equipment in a building operating system or apartment. It then automatically sends the appropriate service requests to the community's technicians.

"We no longer have to go back and check the calendar to see the last time a piece of equipment was replaced or repaired, or do a visual inspection of all our equipment twice a day," says David Bryan, Chief Engineer at 400 East Randolph, a 955-unit Habitat community with nearly 2,000 residents.

"The program's template is tailored to each community's specific needs, and once we perform an initial inspection of all of the systems at each community and



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The Habitat Company

enter that information into the database, the tracking becomes automatic," he says. "The system sends monthly notifications about equipment needing repair and we get quarterly print-outs of about 110 work orders that need to be completed, from grease bearings to electrical work."

The ProActive system is designed to follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance program for each piece of equipment, so it has helped Habitat follow all warranty guidelines. With the new technology in place, the company has a maintenance history for each piece of equipment and every work order ever issued.

Bryan says this more disciplined preventive maintenance program will improve energy efficiency and reduce equipment downtime, leading to considerable savings

over time for the owners. "We can look at the history of the belts on a particular piece of machinery, for example, and determine their average lifespan based on our records," Bryan says. "Once everything is on a set, automated schedule, we'll be able to extend the longevity of the equipment."

ProActive also has become a great teaching tool for new employees, who gain a better understanding of their specific preventive maintenance responsibilities and can learn about each piece of equipment as they complete the work orders.

The automated preventive maintenance system was developed by the Habitat Technology Solutions Group, an in-house group that was organized two years ago to help improve the company's operating efficiency. Pat Phillips, Senior Vice President and Director of Operations for The Habitat Company, was the driving force behind the technology, which took six months to develop. Phillips says there was no real cost involved—other than the allocation of time from various team members—because the system was developed in-house.

Phillips meets quarterly with the company's engineers to review the system, tweaking the program as necessary. "Our building engineers are extremely busy, and ProActive reminds them of what needs to be done and when," Phillips says. "It has also given the owners an opportunity to plan and budget more effectively because they now know exactly when certain pieces of equipment must be replaced." —NAA's Lauren Boston



(Back row) Gary Weich, Plumber; Mersad Kulasic, Maintenance; Almedin Kisija, Maintenance; Ken Wesolowski, Electrician; Asmir Zenkic, Assistant Engineer. (Front row) Felipe Diosdado, Maintenance; David Bryan, Chief Engineer; Harry Santiago, Maintenance.