Written by Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor
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Robert C. Baldwin, CMRP, Editor I've been using the term "preventive maintenance" practically every work day since the founding of MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY magazine in 1988 and frequently during the preceding 15 years.

I'm so used to seeing preventive maintenance in this magazine and in the proceedings of the conferences I attend, I have almost come to believe that we, the practitioners of plant equipment reliability, maintenance, and asset management, have the exclusive right to those words.

With that in mind, I was astonished to see the words "preventive maintenance" on a large banner hung on the side of a building across the intersection where I was waiting to make a right turn out of a shopping center parking lot. The banner read: "Express Care Preventive Maintenance Center."

The three-bay building housed a Valvoline Express Care instant oil change unit. It looked cleaner and brighter than many of the shops I see. I later found out that the "Preventive Maintenance Center" banner flagged it as an establishment with extended service offerings.

After ruminating on the picture of a preventive maintenance sign on the side of a building, I couldn't help but be pleased with its mainstream use in car maintenance. After all, the maintenance schedule in the owners manual is the primary analogy I use when explaining preventive maintenance.

In that analogy, I note that some scheduled tasks will be done more frequently or less frequently than required by actual use patterns and driving conditions. The discussion can extend naturally into predictive or condition based maintenance by pointing out that the proper time to change oil could be determined by testing a sample of engine oil rather than relying on the published schedule.

When consumers faithfully follow the preventive maintenance schedule for their car, they do so because they expect to see a beneficial effect on the car's performance and resale value. So why do some executives feel they can cut maintenance in an industrial plant or major facility and somehow escape without hurting the performance or value of the plant?

I'm reminded of that attribute of civilized human behavior often cited by suppliers of beauty and healthcare products: "We take better care of our pets than we do of ourselves."

If that is true, perhaps it is also true that "we take better care of our cars than we do of our industrial plants."

How is it with you? Which is better maintained—your car or your plant? **MT**

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