

Working order

The Maintec 2008 exhibition at the NEC in March looks set to provide a very useful education and technology update experience. Brian Tinham reports

This year's Maintec exhibition seems set to do rather more than what it says on the tin – with a focus that extends from predictive maintenance to wireless systems for plant data gathering. As well as around 150 exhibitors – including Blackburn College, C-Cubed, Corus Northern Engineering Services, Flir, Fluke, FSI, GE Energy, Monitran, Pruftechnik, RMS, Schaeffler, SoftSols, T-Mac, Vega and Whitelegg Machines – there is a powerful programme of seminars and a new lunchtime briefing on the first day.

Looking at the latter first, PICME (the Process Industries Centre for Manufacturing Excellence) says it wants to address issues around improving plant productivity. Details are scant as yet, but the organisation says visitors will hear about practical ways to reduce waste and increase plant efficiency.

Yearning for learning

As for the 'LearnShops', there are several, with speakers from the SOE IPlantE, BCAS (British Compressed Air Society), UK Thermography Association, Society of Diagnostic Engineers and HSE, as well as commercial organisations. Topics range from predictive maintenance to condition monitoring, health and safety and maintenance scheduling best practice.

Fanuc Robotics, for example, says it will talk about techniques including thermal imaging, vibration analysis and lubrication analysis for indicating early

signs of failure. Meanwhile, for more general fault-finding, Flir Systems' Paul Sacker says he will introduce the principles of infrared thermography and provide examples of its use as a non-contact approach in several industries.

On a different tack, the session by Tim Thomas, senior applications engineer at Baker Instruments, will be worth attending. He makes the very valid point that electric motor testing shouldn't just be about reducing unplanned downtime, but improving plant performance and energy efficiency. Then, in a similar vein, Trevor Holroyd, managing director of Holroyd Instruments, will advise attendees on how to go about phasing in machinery condition monitoring, demonstrating how to get benefits from day one. Incidentally, if you want to learn about wireless systems, Rockwell Automation will be talking about condition monitoring of remote plant, without the cost and complexity of cabling or IT.

However, if your primary concern is cost-effective maintenance, go to training services providers such as AV Technology and Blackburn College, where you will find plenty on setting up suitable programmes. And you should talk to Smith & Nephew and Idhammar Systems, with their focus on using OEE (overall equipment effectiveness) to

create a picture of health. Smith & Nephew's Hull manufacturing site is on its way to being one of the leanest and most efficient operations in the world, as a result of its Idhammar automatic OEE management system.

Meanwhile, in the adjacent Solids 2008 exhibition, there are sessions on two key themes: powder flow and safety. Organiser EasFairs says sessions will look at: guidance on ATEX certification; steps to eliminate fugitive dust; design considerations for pneumatic handling; design for hopper discharge; dust control to meet COSHH and emission limits; and selection criteria for mechanical handling.

Back in Maintec, top tips on exhibitors to visit include: Scafftag for its Safetrak, which combines visual equipment identification with computerised maintenance; Vega for its Vegapuls 67 microwave non-contact level measurement system for silos, hoppers, crushers etc; Fluke and Flir for their new thermal imaging cameras; and CNES for its sheer range of specialist condition monitoring techniques, services and training facilities. **PE**

Maintec

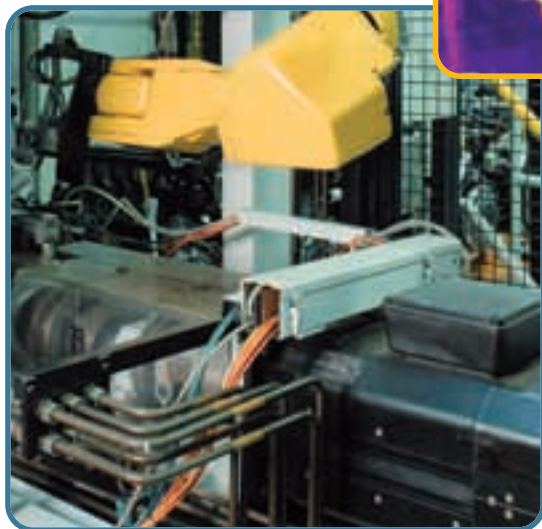
What
Maintec exhibition

Where
NEC Birmingham

When
11-13 March 2008

EasFairs
MAINTEC

11 - 13 March '08
NEC, Birmingham



Left: Condition monitoring using thermography. Go to Fluke's and Flir's stands for the latest products

Far left: IFM vibration monitor detects rolling element bearing failures and shaft imbalance conditions at four locations simultaneously