

Saving time and money is a breeze with Wasp Inventory Control

Tracking high-tech parts – manually



At the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, accurately measuring air quality is a top priority. To provide accurate data, the

district's Ambient Monitoring group measures air quality at 30 monitoring stations around the San Francisco Bay area.

These monitoring stations rely on sophisticated technical equipment, which must remain up and running around the clock. Ongoing operation requires a stable supply of replacement parts, which can cost anywhere from 50 cents to a few thousand dollars and are ordered through 100 different suppliers.

With no formal inventory process in place, the Ambient Monitoring group struggled to keep accurate counts of its replacement parts. The group relied on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which was supposed to list all of the parts housed in a central supply room. The spreadsheet was rarely accurate and did not account for parts housed at each field station. Instead, the parts stored in the field were tracked on a clip board at each monitoring station.

"When a technician needed a replacement part, he would spend between two and three hours calling around to the various field technicians looking for it," said Bryan Bibeau, a senior air quality instrument specialist for the Ambient Monitoring group. "Since we replace between four and five parts a week, as a group we were wasting between 500 and 750 hours a year just tracking down parts."



Because there was no central tracking method, the group frequently ran out of needed parts, which then had to be ordered from a supplier. This delayed the repair time for critical equipment. Also, parts that were overstocked languished on the shelf.

"Each year, we budget for \$100,000 in replacement parts, in addition to \$250,000 that is available to buy new equipment," Bibeau said. "Yet when management asked how our budget was being used, we could not provide an accurate answer."

CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE...

▶ INDUSTRY

Local government

▶ ORGANIZATION PROFILE

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District regulates stationary sources of air pollution in the nine counties surrounding San Francisco Bay.

▶ SITUATION

The district's Ambient Monitoring group replaced between four and five parts a week while making repairs at its 30 air quality monitoring stations. There was no coordinated or centralized effort to manage inventory parts, prompting each technician to create their own system. Furthermore, the manual method of tracking and ordering replacement parts was inefficient, inaccurate and frustrating.

▶ RESULTS

With Wasp Inventory Control, the Ambient Monitoring group improved its inventory process significantly, saving the equivalent of \$36,000 per year and achieving a positive return on investment in less than two months. In addition, by accurately tracking parts, the group has been able to increase the variety of items stocked and to manage minimum quantities. Delays that once occurred in the repair of key equipment have virtually been eliminated.

▶ PRODUCTS USED

- Wasp InventoryControl Enterprise

A breath of fresh air

Bibeau purchased Wasp Inventory Control, which offers the extensive features of an enterprise-level inventory management product without a hefty price tag or complex implementation. He began implementation by relocating all parts to two central supply rooms, which are neatly organized with shelving and bins. Each part has a barcode that can be easily scanned.



Bibeau established the organization's initial inventory levels by scanning in the replacement parts already in stock. When the barcodes were scanned, the Wasp Inventory Control database was automatically updated with the data, including quantity, supplier and location. Now, technicians can instantly search for available stock using any PC, relying on Inventory Control for accurate inventory counts.

"What used to take hours now requires less than five minutes," Bibeau said. "Technicians avoid the frustration associated with hunting for parts. Plus, they can spend more time on high-value tasks."

In addition, stock replenishment now takes a fraction of the time it once did. Bibeau can review parts on hand from his desk, rather than manually sorting through the stock room. When receiving parts, he can quickly scan them into the system. Inventory Control even provides a suggested location for new parts in the stockroom, eliminating any guesswork.

Faster repairs and less frustration

With Wasp Inventory Control, the Ambient Monitoring group has eliminated tens of thousands of dollars in wasted time and significantly improved its inventory process. Tangible benefits include:

- Up to \$30,000 per year of time saved that was formerly used searching for parts. Instead, technicians can focus on value-added tasks that are also more fulfilling.
- Up to \$6,000 per year of time saved that was formerly consumed by managing and replenishing the stockroom.
- Better use of inventory dollars. Now, the Ambient Monitoring group stores a broader variety of items and an ideal number of each part. Needed items are always on hand, eliminating delays in equipment repairs. Overstock has also been eliminated, ensuring that a wider and more effective mix of parts is always available.
- Improved accountability for management. Accurate reports are available at the touch of a button, demonstrating exactly how each dollar is spent.

After successfully improving the inventory tracking process, Bibeau now is moving to improve the purchasing process. Using Wasp Inventory Control's purchase order capabilities, he is anticipating additional cost savings and efficiencies.

"When I joined the group and saw the current manual process, I just couldn't imagine how anyone could track inventory using Excel," Bibeau said. "Now, using Inventory Control, life is a lot easier for me, and the whole process is better for everyone involved."

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Senior Air Quality Instrument Specialist