

# BEWARE THE HIDDEN COST OF OVERLOOKED TASKS

## THE EFFICIENCY EDGE



In today's fast-paced industrial landscape, minor oversights can trigger major crises. As Benjamin Franklin cautioned, 'A small leak will sink a great ship.' In modern manufacturing, these leaks occur in the form of missed maintenance, overlooked safety checks, and untracked procedures - leading to costly operational failures.

While many companies have made significant strides with digital transformation and automation, some critical routine tasks still rely on outdated manual processes. When left unchecked, these seemingly small lapses can escalate into financial, safety, and operational disasters.

In this article, we explore four real-world examples where failure to automate or track routine procedures led to costly - and avoidable - outcomes.

### 1. Unverified bolting tools: A recall nightmare

The first example comes from an axle assembly facility, where specialised bolting tools were used to tighten safety-critical components.

The inclusion of offset gearboxes, which are used in space-saving configurations, meant that the tightening tools required more frequent verification than standard tools to compensate for the inefficiencies inherent in the gearbox design, and the impact of wear and tear.

*While standard bolting tools might typically be verified every six months, the company had an unwritten process in place to check these tools*

*every six to eight weeks. When the responsible quality engineer left the company, the replacement engineer unknowingly reverted to a standard six-month verification cycle.*

The result? Over 13,000 bolts were incorrectly tightened, compromising part integrity and triggering a costly recall campaign. A simple digital task management system could have flagged the missed verifications, preventing this multi-million-dollar mistake.



## 2. Dusty machines: A million-dollar oversight

In another instance, neglecting basic housekeeping led to a staggering \$1.2 million-dollar failure for a manufacturer of catalytic converters.

Because a lot of dust is generated during the production process, one of the routine maintenance steps involved daily cleaning of the machines. If left unattended, this dust acts like sandpaper on the moving parts of a machine.

In this case, one of the critical components - the shaft - wore out, which affected the force measurement during the assembly process. This meant that parts could not be built to standard, and the entire production line was shut down.

*Because the shaft had a long lead time for replacement, the company lost an estimated \$1.2 million in production value over seven days.*

This situation could have been avoided with automated maintenance alerts and digital task tracking, ensuring that essential cleaning procedures were never skipped.

## 3. Unchecked fire extinguishers: A hospital on the brink

At a government hospital in South Africa, a routine fire safety audit uncovered a critical oversight: key fire extinguishers - especially those in kitchen areas - had not been inspected or serviced on schedule.

*Fire extinguisher inspections are a mandatory safety requirement, and an enforced hospital shutdown - or battling a fire with non-functional extinguishers - could have resulted in significant loss of life.*

Fortunately, the issue was corrected in time, but the near-miss underscores the need for digital tracking systems to ensure compliance with safety protocols.

*A simple digital dashboard could have provided real-time visibility into inspections, ensuring accountability and preventing regulatory breaches.*





## 4. A glove in the turbine: A multi-million dollar mistake

In another large manufacturing plant, a scheduled turbine maintenance shutdown took a costly turn after a technician accidentally left a glove inside one of the turbines.

Fortunately, the turbine had advanced vibration monitoring sensors that detected abnormalities at startup. Unfortunately, these alerts were sent to an unattended email inbox, and no immediate action was taken.

*Three months later, the turbine suffered catastrophic failure, resulting in an estimated \$2.75 million in damages, repairs, and downtime.*

This case proves that even the best technology is useless without proper accountability mechanisms. A digital workflow system with real-time notifications to responsible personnel could have triggered immediate action, preventing this costly breakdown.

## Digital solutions: The key to preventing small leaks

These examples highlight a common issue: small, routine tasks are often overlooked – until they snowball into major failures.

The reality is that manual processes are prone to human error, especially as organisations demand more from employees while reducing headcount. Digital systems offer a solution by:

- Automating routine verifications and maintenance schedules
- Providing real-time notifications to the right stakeholders
- Creating dashboards for visibility into task completion
- Ensuring accountability with digital checklists and alerts

With efficiency and precision now a competitive requirement for manufacturers, digital transformation is no longer a luxury – it's a necessity. By leveraging digital tools to monitor and automate essential processes, businesses can stop small inefficiencies from escalating into costly disasters.

It's time to plug the leaks before they sink the ship.

For more on digital task management, visit <https://odincheckpoint.io/>

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