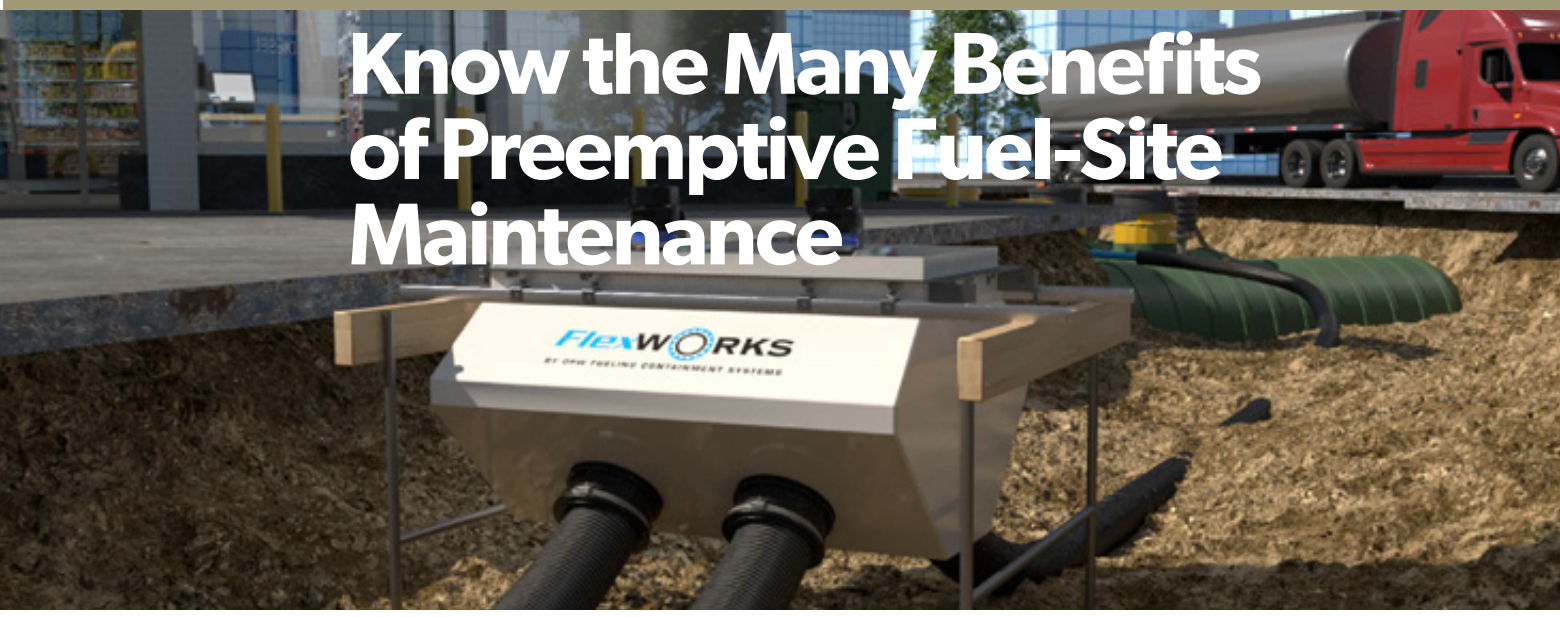
Know the Many Benefits of Preemptive Fuel-Site Maintenance



By Ed Kammerer

The developers and manufacturers of dispensing and storage equipment and systems for retail fueling sites have worked hard over the years to increasingly improve the safety and reliability of their products.

OPW ElectroTite tank sump cutaway

As a result, many site owners and operators can be at risk of adopting a "set it and forget it" attitude about that equipment, figuring that since it has reliably worked as required from day one, it will continue to do so indefinitely.

Couple this potential assumption with the fact that much of the storage equipment and systems are located underground, and an "out of sight, out of mind" complacency can be compounded. Site operators need to be vigilant about site maintenance and equipment updates because the simple fact is that all mechanical equipment will, at some point, reach the end of its useful life. Without proper maintenance and monitoring, equipment that is used beyond its expected shelf life has the potential to result in a catastrophic spill or leak. In other words, waiting for something to break before replacing it can end up being a very costly mistake.

Poorly maintained or out-of-date equipment – which may also no longer be compliant with the latest governmental regulations – can result in a higher total cost of ownership, compromising the overall profitability of the fueling operation, while increasing liability concerns. Avoiding this requires site operators to adopt a preemptive versus reactive stance regarding maintenance. Many operators may not realize that a fuel-dispensing nozzle is not working properly until a customer mentions it – not the ideal first line of defense against a malfunctioning nozzle.

A Forward-Looking Approach

While fueling equipment and system manufacturers are experts at developing standard-setting components for fueling sites, they are also very good at improving on existing designs. That's another area where site operators may be missing out if they don't take a preemptive approach to equipment monitoring and maintenance. Something newer and better may have entered the market in those five to 10 years since that tank sump or manhole cover or shutoff valve has been installed.

OPW Retail Fueling, Smithfield, NC, is one of those companies that is always striving to improve its product offering. So, if it's been a while since you took stock of your dispensing and storage equipment, now might be a good time to do so. OPW has introduced these latest advanced products to the market over the past few years:

- **14C Diesel-Capture Nozzle:** This offering in the new 14 Series nozzle family has a specially designed Integral Diesel Capture Chamber and Environmental Drip Guard. The nozzle captures diesel fuel inside and outside the spout when the nozzle is returned to the cradle, creating a cleaner and safer fueling experience. This diesel-capture chamber also allows the nozzle's venturi to evacuate the captured fuel and reintroduce it into the fuel stream. Approved for use with diesel blends up to B20.
- **10 Plus Emergency Shutoff Valve:** The patent-pending SmartGuard design of the 10 Plus contains undetected shear-groove leaks that can result from low-impact incidents at the dispenser. This helps prevent fuel from leaking into sumps, thereby helping customers reduce the risk of fire, explosion, >>

personal injury, property damage, environmental contamination, product loss and costly cleanup operations.

- **Fibrelite Manhole Covers:** Fibrelite manhole covers are watertight, easy to remove and non-bolted, making them ideal for use in all forecourt applications ranging from general tank-sump access to single/multiport fill sumps, and interstitial sumps to monitoring wells. They are available in a wide range of colors and sizes, including round, square and rectangular, and all feature an anti-slip surface; anti-corrosion construction; a monolithic structure that eliminates delaminating; and ergonomic, single-person removal capability via the Fibrelite lifting handle.
- **FlexWorks Dual-Layer Access Pipe:** This four-inch and six-inch diameter corrugated pipe is used to provide access to flexible underground piping and permit its replacement, all with no need to break concrete. The piping is crush and puncture-resistant, strong enough to withstand H-20 loading requirements and thick enough to minimize damage from shipping and job-site handling.
- **Rigid Entry Fittings (REF):** This next-generation entry fitting has minimal exposed rubber, yet is designed to accommodate ground shifting and movement through its hard-shell exterior. Built-in sealing redundancy maximizes product containment and prevention of water intrusion, while preserving total accessibility for monitoring, maintenance, testing and repair.
- **ElectroTite Tank Sump:** The ElectroTite is the industry's first and only conduitless tank sump. The tank sump comes from the factory with an integrated, UL-listed junction box, so no more drilling holes in your sump that could turn into a potential leak point in the future. The stainless-steel ring and watertight sealing gasket improve the sump's sealing ability. The height-adjustable top hat accommodates different bury depths, while the ergonomic L-handle supports strain-free removal of the lid, and a visual indicator lets the operator know that the watertight lid has been securely replaced. All of this makes the ElectroTite the most watertight sump on the market.

Conclusion

Peace of mind is a great thing for fuel-site operators to possess, and being able to rely on reliable, years-long performance from dispensing and storage equipment goes a long way toward ensuring that peace of mind is achieved. But the simple truth is that all equipment will eventually wear out and need to be replaced. The trick is knowing when the optimum time for replacement is, rather than waiting for a catastrophic-failure event to occur. By preemptively taking stock of the operation of storage and dispensing systems – and possibly even considering an upgrade to some of the noteworthy new technologies that have entered the market in recent years – fuel-site operators will optimize the total cost of ownership of their sites while also being able to sleep soundly at night.

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