

## Defining Work Order Priorities

There can be no perfect method of defining or establishing work order priority. In most organisations the workload is dynamic and priorities are constantly being monitored and changed. We can however create some ground rules to assist with this, particularly where planned work orders are concerned. A method of calculating a priority score was developed in the USA in the 1960's but I consider this to be a bit too complex for the real world. It used a combination of work and equipment types to calculate priority. I have devised a simplified version of this as the basis for the scoring method outlined below. Note that your operation may require that some of these definitions be up or downgraded. Clearly, you must change the matrix to suit your needs.

	<b>Work/Job Type</b>	<b>Equipment Type</b>	
5	<b>Genuine Safety Concern</b> (Work where equipment failure has caused a critical personnel or product safety risk.)	<b>Safety</b> (Equipment posing a risk to the safety of personnel or the product. E.g. in a meat, poultry or other food production plant where contamination could be a problem.)	5
4	<b>Failure of Critical Plant</b> (Work where equipment failure has caused or has potential to cause major downtime or quality problems.)	<b>Utilities &amp; Class A Critical Equipment</b> (Utilities or equipment that could cause a total plant or main assembly line shutdown, where no backup is available.)	4
3	<b>Servicing or Preventative Maintenance</b> (Scheduled maintenance and servicing required to be done during production to ensure that production output and quality are maintained and supported.)	<b>Utilities and Class B Critical Equipment</b> (As above where backup is available, or equipment where shutdown of secondary assembly lines would be effected, or critical material handling equipment. This may include environmental control and heating equipment.)	3
2	<b>Routine or Back up Maintenance</b> (Routine preventative maintenance, scheduled maintenance on back up equipment, routine safety checks or improvement work.)	<b>Class C Critical Equipment</b> (Production, waste and material handling equipment where back up is available. Also support and office equipment, e.g. computers.)	2
1	<b>Housekeeping</b> (Painting, toilet maintenance, general housekeeping duties.)	<b>Buildings and Premises</b> (Maintenance to buildings, toilets, restaurants, grounds, decoration, etc.)	1

### How does it Work?

Ok, you have developed your matrix and adjusted it to include your own definitions, the next step is to calculate your priority scores. The job and the equipment are first classified, then the relevant scores are multiplied together. The result provides the priority score. Lets say that the type of work was "servicing or PM" (3) on "utilities or class A critical equipment" (4). This would result in a score of 12.

This is particularly easy to apply to routine or scheduled maintenance, where both the types of work and equipment are known at the implementation stage. It becomes a little more difficult with breakdowns, where production personnel who are suffering downtime may not agree with the scoring. Ultimately, where breakdowns are concerned, we all tend to "think on our feet". Other people are involved here and as they say "the squeakiest wheel gets the oil".

**NOTE:** In some operations, the above method may be considered too complex. I have used a simple 1,2 or 3 priority system before and this is sufficient for many people. This works on the following broad definitions:

1. Must be done immediately
2. Should be done as soon as possible
3. Can be left until next service period

Completion time targets can be added to the above if required.