MAINTENANCE Update
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Special COVID-19 Edition

Increasing the Volume of Outside Fresh Air in Facilities

Please share with plant and district leadership, operations, maintenance, and other personnel as needed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has suggested increasing the volume of outside fresh air in facilities. This will provide cleaner, fresher air to workspaces.

Eighty five percent of plants have the ability to increase the amount of outside air brought indoors through use of the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Building Automation System (BAS). The other fifteen percent of plants can increase the amount of outside air pulled indoors by manually opening the outside air dampers.

Various factors are involved with bringing outside air into plants in different areas around the country. Heat and humidity will affect employees and processing equipment. In areas that may be impacted by these elements, it is recommended outside air dampers be opened gradually and to observe plant conditions. If heat or humidity become a problem, plants can incrementally close dampers until the desired results are achieved.

Instructions:

1. Central plants (mail processing facilities):
   a. Maintenance can increase the intake of fresh air using the site's BAS.
   b. In buildings where the BAS is not functioning or unavailable, building maintenance can manually open relief dampers.
   c. As last resort, sites can open dock doors and turn on exhaust fans to increase outside air.
   d. Exhaust fans can create additional airflow.

NOTE

Depending on outside air temperature and humidity, the amount of fresh air that can be drawn in and still maintain comfort will vary. Additionally, sites should monitor opening and closing doors to ensure proper airflow. Knowledgeable technicians can use the BAS to do this automatically; however, other scenarios will require building maintenance to actively manage the process.

Continued

Increasing the Volume of Outside Fresh Air in Facilities (continued)

2. Roof top units for larger customer service buildings and some mail processing facilities:
   a. Buildings with BAS, building maintenance should be able to operate as described in Step 1.
   b. For buildings with simpler control systems, economizers are usually preprogrammed with a set amount of fresh air depending on the outside humidity and temperature. A qualified employee can make damper adjustments when necessary. If a technician is required to perform this task, contact Field Maintenance Operations (FMO) and fill out the required Maintenance Work Order Request (PS Form 4805).
   c. As last resort, if an area maintenance technician can't physically get to your site to make the damper adjustments. Dock doors can be opened to allow fresh air to be drawn in while carriers are inside the building and then closed when they leave. In some cases, too many open doors can decrease air conditioning systems ability to adequately cool roof top units/systems. The facility will have to gauge how many doors need to be open, and for how long, depending on the outside conditions. If the building becomes uncomfortable due to increased heat or humidity, begin closing dock doors to maintain an acceptable work environment for both employees and equipment.
3. Split systems (smaller facilities):
   a. There is usually no fresh air intake on these buildings. The best way to draw in fresh air is to open a door or window on opposite sides of the building for cross ventilation. The amount of time the door or window is left open depends on outside humidity and temperature conditions.
   b. The facility should monitor inside temperatures to maintain a comfortable work environment for the employees. If cross ventilation cannot be achieved, turn on bathroom exhaust fans. Exhausting air through a bathroom fan will create airflow, allowing fresh outside air to be drawn into the site via open doors and/or windows.
   c. If a facility does not have an exhaust fan, an electric fan can be used to exhaust interior air out a window to create cross ventilation by drawing the fresh air in via open door(s) and/or window(s).

HQ Maintenance Operations

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Maintenance Technical Support Center

USPS/MTSC
600 W. Rock Creek Rd.
Norman, OK 73069
(405) 573-2123
(800) 366-4123
Maintenance.line@usps.gov