What Every Packaging Employee Should Know about Washdown

When it comes to overseeing hot melt machines and their operators in a packaging environment, one of the most common problems we see is failure of parts due to improper washdown procedure. Anyone in the packaging industry knows that the cost of hot melt parts can add up significantly over time.

Inexperienced machine operators, lack of education by supervisors, and improper part selection can all contribute to premature part failure, which can substantially add to the cost of keeping your production lines running. At Keystone Industries, we want to help you keep your hot melt machines running as efficiently and affordably as possible, so we took it upon ourselves to cover the most common topics surrounding washdown,and also talk about what the future holds for hot melt washdown.

The Importance of Washdown for The Packaging Industry

Many packaging and manufacturing facilities (especially in the food/beverage and pharmaceutical spaces) are required to wash down their machines regularly. This is to prevent bacteria and other harmful matter from contaminating the products that will be consumed by the end user. Washdown is also important for environments that experience large volumes of dust or small particles of packaging debris to ensure they do not interfere with proper function of the hot melt machine and equipment.

Two Common Problems Involving Washdown

Problem 1: User Error & Lack of Education

When it comes to electricalshortages from washdown, most problems are the result of one of two contributors: improper procedure by the operator, or an inadequate part. Most of the time, it is the former – inexperienced machine operators may not know which parts are resistant to water and which are not. Of course, there is the possibility that the operator may be properly educated, but may just be careless in their personal washdown routine. While some user error is inevitable in many washdown environments, proper education is the best way to combat this problem.

As a supervisor or manager of your production environment, it is extremely important to thoroughly walk through the washdown process with each new employee. Ask them to repeat important points back to you, and quickly quiz them on the procedure after you run through it so you can be sure that they were paying adequate attention and retained theinformation.If you notice parts fail that you suspect are related to improper washdown, observe the employee during their next washdown to be sure they are following proper procedure. A few quick moments of education and observation of procedure can mean significant savings on failed parts.

Problem 2: Lack of Washdown Hot Melt Parts

Aside from user error and education, the other main contributor to part failure is simply the part itself being inadequate. For environments where thorough washdown is required, using standard parts simply won't cut it. Standard hot melt parts are typically very prone to electrical shorting when they come in contact with any amount of water, rendering washdown very difficult, if not impossible using these parts.

Choosing a washdown hose or applicator head can help avoid part failure due to electrical shortages. These hoses often feature a rubber sleeve or coating and a water resistant electrical connection that helps keep the electrical components of the part from getting wet. The glue heads have a silicone gasket protecting the inside electronic connections and a matching water-resistant electrical connector. This is a great way to protect your hot melt parts from peripheral droplets or spray that may be created during the washdown process. These parts may be slightly more expensive than a standard part, but the cost savings you'll experience due to the longer part life is well worth the additional investment.

The Limitations of Washdown Parts

Washdown hot melt parts are a huge step in the right direction for those looking to avoid electrical failure of parts ina washdown environment. At the same time, it is very important to keep in mind that these parts have their limitations. Because washdown parts simply protect the electrical components, the components themselves are just as

susceptible to electrical shortages as standard parts if those components come into contact with water.

In short, a washdown part is more water resistant than a standard part, but this does not make the part fully submersible in water. Any attempts to soak, dip, or submerge the part in water will likely result in electrical damage to the part, so your washdown procedures should strive to avoid including any of these methods. If you use parts manufactured by Keystone Industries and want to know if a certain technique is safe for the parts, feel free to ask us!

Your Source for Hot Melt Washdown Parts

Even if youfollow washdown best practices and don't experience electrical shortages of your parts regularly, you can still experience huge savings by choosing hot melt replacement parts from Keystone Industries. Our parts cost up to 70% less than OEM parts, and our friendly customer service is here to help with any questions you may have. But don't take it from us! Read our testimonials to see what some of our current customers have to say, then browse our site for Nordson®-compatible parts at a great price!