



Chicago
Pneumatic

The shortest guide for the longest-lasting compressor

7 PRO-TIPS TO EXTEND YOUR
PORTABLE AIR COMPRESSOR'S LIFE



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01 Making a lasting compressor last

WITH THIS SIMPLE GUIDE



When a compressor stops on the job, everything stops with it. The work stops. The crew stops. The progress stops. But the clock keeps ticking, and downtime costs keep rising.

Most compressors don't fail overnight. They are machines made to keep delivering through the toughest jobs and most demanding conditions.

Whether for construction, mining, renovation or maintenance, you need a compressor you can rely on to get the job done.

“The simplest things are often the ones left unattended.”

ALBERT CANTUBA
— Regional Business Development
Manager in South East Asia

But can your compressor rely on you to take care of it?

The majority of compressor failures come down to the same avoidable mistakes. Small habits get skipped. Daily checks become monthly. Shortcuts replace proper procedures. Nobody thinks much about it until it's too late.

At Chicago Pneumatic, we've been building portable air compressors and handheld tools for over 125 years. In that time, we've seen our machines work in every condition imaginable. From the historic construction of the Empire State Building to the unforgiving heat of desert mines, humid shipyards and high-altitude mountain passes.

Through it all, we've learned a lot about what keeps them running. This guide brings together that knowledge, along with insights from four seasoned experts in the field.

The advice here is simple and practical. Save it, read it, keep it close. Our portable air compressors are already built to last, and by following these tips, they can last even longer.

02 7 daily checks

FOR EVERY PORTABLE AIR COMPRESSOR AND EVERY JOB

- **Before you start your compressor**

1. REMOVE THE DUST

Dust is the number one cause of compressor failure. Make sure to empty dust collectors daily and keep your filters clean. (Important: the primary filter and the safety element must never be cleaned, but replaced at the interval shared in the manual).

2. CHECK THE OIL

Too dark, with a milky aspect, or below the line? Top it up or change it before you run anything.

3. DRAIN THE MOISTURE

Compressed air carries water. It collects in the system and causes rust if you let it sit. Open the drain valve, let it out, close it.

4. LOOK AT THE CONTROL PANEL

Any warning lights? Extremely high operating temperatures? Deal with them before it impacts your work.



“The technology changes, but the fundamentals are the same. Consistency is key.”

GAURAV PANDEY
— Zonal Manager in India



“Sometimes operators want to shut down the machine faster, so they hit the emergency stop. But the engine needs time to cool first. Done enough times, it causes real damage.”

DMITRI CREMO
— Northeast Regional Sales Manager in the United States

◦ **After getting the job done**

5. SHUT IT DOWN PROPERLY

The emergency stop is for emergencies. For everything else, follow the shutdown steps in your manual.

6. REFUEL AT THE END OF THE DAY, NOT THE START

If the tank is empty overnight, air moves in and condensates. A full tank overnight means less moisture building up inside.

7. USE GENUINE PARTS

After periods of heavy use, you'll need to make small replacements to keep your compressor in the best possible condition. Using non-genuine filters, oils and lubricants can feel like saving money in the moment. However, they can cause more harm than good in the long run. Genuine parts help the compressor perform the way it was designed to.



03 The ideal care for different situations

**THE BASICS DON'T CHANGE.
YOUR ENVIRONMENT DOES.**



A compressor working in desert heat faces different challenges than one near the ocean or on top of a cold mountain. They can take a lot, but different challenges also mean different needs.

- **Hot climates and dusty jobsites**

Heat affects cooling systems.
Dust clogs the airflows.

**CLEAN FILTERS
MORE OFTEN.**

If there is a heavy amount of dirt, you can even clean it daily.

**KEEP RADIATORS
AND COOLERS CLEAR**

Avoid overheating due to blocked airflows.

DON'T OPEN THE CANOPY

The machine cools itself with an internal fan, and opening the canopy can disrupt this.

“Compressors don't get tender loving care out there in the field. They are typically subjected to extreme hot or cold temperatures, dusty environments and uneven grounds. Not adapting to it can cause common operational mistakes.”

ALBERT CANTUBA

— Regional Business Development
Manager in South East Asia

- **Coastal locations**

Salt air and sand attack both internal and exposed components.

CHECK FOR CORROSION MORE REGULARLY

Sand can enter the airflows and deteriorate canopies. (Our machines are built to avoid this, but an extra check is never a waste of time.)

ALWAYS CLEAN THE MACHINE DOWN after work in these conditions.



- **Cold and high altitude**

Cold thickens oil and makes starting harder. High altitude reduces air density and output.

WAIT FOR THE ENGINE TO WARM UP PROPERLY

Starting before it's ready wears the machine out faster.

A SLIGHT DROP IN OUTPUT IS NORMAL

There's less air in these conditions. Overcranking your compressor can ruin the mechanism.

04 Becoming an expert user

IN 3 SIMPLE WAYS

“Experienced users pay attention. New users overlook details, and that's where the problems start.”

GAURAV PANDEY
— Zonal Manager in India

Being an expert compressor operator doesn't require expert technical knowledge. It's about staying consistent and understanding the equipment you work with every day.

The difference between expert users who keep their machines for many years and those whose compressors have a shorter lifetime **comes down to 3 things:**

01

Expert users **listen**

A healthy compressor has a rhythm. Expert users hear new sounds or unusual vibrations and take it as a warning. Catch it early, and it's usually a small fix. Leave it, and it becomes a big one.

02

Expert users **follow the service schedule**

The maintenance schedule is there for a reason. It's based on real data. Operators who follow it get more life out of their machines. Waiting until it breaks always costs more than the service that would have stopped it.

03

Expert users **read the manual**

You have all the information you need in the Manufacturer's Instruction Manual. New users tend to go through it once, then barely touch it again. Experts read it, re-read it and pay attention to its guidelines.

05 Your manual is the final word

DISCLAIMERS AND REMINDERS

Compressors do extremely tough jobs. While we can't guarantee they will never break, we can do our part to prevent issues that can stop your work.

The advice here applies broadly to portable air compressors. But every machine is different. **Your manual is the final word on intervals, specifications and procedures for your specific model.** When in doubt, check what it says.

“Many users neglect reading manuals and fail to check essential items, leading to avoidable issues.”

DMITRI CREMO

— Northeast Regional Sales Manager in the United States





06 Get the job done

WITH CHICAGO PNEUMATIC

Caring for a portable air compressor shouldn't be complicated. At the beginning of this guide, we asked if your compressor could rely on you to take care of it. Armed with these habits, the answer is a definitive yes.

Over more than 125 years, our machines have left our factories and headed out into the unknown, ready to face the toughest jobs and harshest conditions. Through watching our portable air compressors in the field, we've continuously learned and improved to give you a machine that keeps delivering, no matter the challenge.

Wherever your work takes you next, these simple habits will help you keep your portable air compressor running at its best, so you can continue to focus on **getting the job done**.



Want to go further?

Our experts can help you optimize your setup based on your application.

[Find your local CP expert →](#)



**Chicago
Pneumatic**

At Chicago Pneumatic we have a passion for performance and long-lasting partnerships. Since 1901, we have been committed to reliability based on technology and trust.

People. Passion. Performance.