



PREPARING PORTABLE DIESEL AIR COMPRESSORS FOR SPRING

By Jerel Cole



Ah, the sounds and smells of spring—singing birds, buzzing bees, freshly-cut grass and jackhammers. Yes, the sweet sound of jackhammers. As most things come out of hibernation and construction season heats up, it's time to make sure your portable diesel air compressor is ready for the jobsite. This is especially important if you live in a climate with long, cold winters and your equipment was stored or idle for months.

Winter can be harsh, but with a little care, you can make sure your compressor is in tip-top shape for spring. This will help prevent unexpected breakdowns and extend the life of your compressor. So, an important question you may ask, what does preparing portable air compressors for spring entail? It involves visual checks and safety inspections, which will benefit your equipment and operation.

Why You Should Prepare Your Equipment for Spring

With warmer and longer days, preparing your compressor is likely the last thing on your mind—but don't neglect it. By preparing as soon as the weather starts to warm up, it'll help ensure a smooth transition from storage to the jobsite.

Preparing your air compressor for spring will help:

Prevent downtime: If you already had to store your compressor over the winter, surely you do not want the compressor out of service longer than you need to. There's never a good time for downtime. By taking steps now, you can help ensure the compressor remains reliable and ready to get to work with optimal performance.

Protect your investment: Portable diesel air compressors are an investment, and they're vital to your

work. If you take care of the compressor, it will take care of you. By taking a few key steps at the start of the spring season, it'll help your compressor remain reliable and durable for the long-haul.

Improve safety: Keep your employees safe by keeping up with maintenance. By neglecting maintenance, it can lead to malfunctions or other hazards which can be easily avoided. Air compressors should be only operated by those who have been properly trained and delegated to do so.

How to Prepare Your Compressor for Spring

Now that you know why it's important to prepare your portable air compressor for spring, next is how to go about it. Make sure your portable air compressor is on a level surface and has ample open space around it—at minimum, three feet—to conduct a comprehensive visual inspection. Conduct this inspection before taking it out to the jobsite for the first time in the spring season.

Many customers place portable air compressors in storage for the winter, so after locating the machine, some key items on your checklist should include:

Conducting a Walkaround

During this walkaround, check for any loose wires or connections; damaged piping; heat or cold damage to parts, which can appear as discolorations or the presence of a burnt odor; low fluids; low (or no) fuel; and loose or broken belts.

Checking Telematics and GPS

Telematics and GPS technology allow you to track and locate your equipment in the palm of your hand. If the equipment were to go missing, it can help with recovery efforts. Beyond that, telematics alerts you to fuel consumption and level; maintenance reports/faults; compressor health monitoring; maintenance planning and more. Having access to well-documented maintenance and repair data – via telematics – is critical, emphasizing the need to keep yours working properly.

Checking and/or Changing Filters

Check air, oil and fuel filters and replace as needed. Proper selection and use of filters will prevent many short- and long-term problems with your air compressor. Air filters, for instance, can quickly build up debris and reduce the compressor's efficiency.

Checking and Topping off Fluids

Fluids get thicker when the compressor is not in use. When the fluid gets thicker, it makes it more difficult for the engine's rotating parts to operate, and the compressor must then work harder to operate altogether. Avoid unnecessary stress on the compressor by making sure all fluids are topped off and ready to go.

Changing the Compressor Oil, if Needed

We recommend Sullair AWF® All Weather Fluid, which is one of the only fluids in the industry formulated specifically for use in portable air compressors. As its name indicates, it helps the compressor operate in all seasons, from extreme cold to extreme hot ambient conditions.

Checking Tire Pressure

A flat tire won't get you anywhere fast. Low temperatures in the winter can often mean low tire pressure, so be sure the tires are inflated to the proper psi, which can be found on side wall of your tire or in the compressor's user manual.

Checking Coolers

If you work in dirty or dusty environments like media blasting and farming, be sure to check and clean the coolers. Dirty or clogged up coolers and radiators can be a common cause for a machine to overheat and shutdown. Make sure they're clean as you kickoff construction season.

Checking the Battery

During winter, most compressor owners use tenders to help maintain the battery's charge without overcharging. If you do not use tenders, add battery chargers to make sure the battery is fully charged and ready to get to work.

Checking Ancillary Components

Do you plan to use ancillary components, such as pneumatic tools? These should be prepped, too. Check your tools and do some pre-starts and pre-checks to make sure everything is in working order.

Keeping up with Set Frequency Maintenance Plans

Set frequency maintenance plans may vary based on engine manufacturer, compressor size, climate and day-to-day operating conditions, but Sullair generally recommends maintenance at 500 hours, 1000 hours and 1500 hours. Typically, the compressor fluids and separator elements are both replaced every 1500 hours.

Have a Cleaning Plan in Place

As long as COVID-19 endures, make sure you have a cleaning regimen in place. Be sure to clean and disinfect your portable air compressor to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Pay special attention to high-touch surface areas, such as buttons, controls, latches, knobs, gauges, access doors, handles, the drawbar and valves. Use a standard sanitizing wipe or cloth with EPA-registered household disinfectant to sanitize frequently touched areas either daily or each time a different operator uses the compressor.

Just as you may do a little spring cleaning in your house with the change of the season, you should also do some spring cleaning and maintenance on your air compressor. It will help ensure that, come spring, it's not just birds chirping and bees buzzing, but your air compressor will be humming along on the jobsite, too.