A Guide to Copier Maintenance Agreements

If you are buying or leasing an office copier or a multi-function machine these pages are for you!

This guide will help you understand the key issues in looking after your machine after it has been delivered. For information about buying or leasing or renting and help before its been delivered, you should read our free “buyers guide for office machines”

Overview

When you invest in an office copier or multi-function machine (one that copies, prints, scans and maybe faxes), you will want to be sure that it always delivers top quality results and is reliable, year after year.

Nobody would expect a complex machine to run many thousands of pages without some periodic maintenance or the occasional breakdown. To provide maintenance as well as repair faults, the office products industry has devised a ‘pay as you go’ scheme often referred to as a “cost per copy” or “copy-cost” agreement.

The following information is based on the normal practices of the office products industry & Protocopy’s Service Department. You should check for any differences in policy from other suppliers.

Who Can Have a Copy Cost Agreement?

Anyone. The machine must be equipped with a meter to record the copies (or prints or faxes) made. Some machines will have a mechanical meter while newer digital machines may have an electronic meter, accessible using the control panel. Machines on a network can often be scanned by dedicated software to discover the page count.

Cost per Copy agreements do not work well if a machine is unlikely to achieve a significant copy volume, usually 1,000—1,500 copies per month.
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Who Cannot Have an Agreement?
Smaller photocopiers and many printers are often not equipped with the essential page meter and therefore are not suitable for an agreement.

An agreement is usually charged in arrears so it is a form of credit facility and may be subject to credit status approval.

Companies with more than one photocopier of the same make must accept agreements for all machines. It is not practicable to have a fully inclusive agreement (see what’s included below) for only one machine.

How does it work?

It’s a bit like the pay-as-you-go agreements for mobile phones except that with a copier or printer you pay for the pages produced. Printing and copying jobs are counted together.

There’s one price for black and another for colour. The machine will record the total number of black (and colour, if available) prints made, your supplier will work out how many prints have been made and your monthly or quarterly bill is worked out simply by multiplying the price (expressed in pennies or fractions of a penny per A4 size page) by the number of pages.

How much can I expect to pay?

Anything from 0.5 pence to 2 pence for B&W and from 5p for colour.

Smaller, cheaper machines have the highest running costs, based on the manufacturer’s prices. The biggest machines, while costing much, much more do offer the lowest page costs.

The price per page is based upon a number of other factors too; including the size, type, age of machine, copy volumes expected, accessories fitted and working environment, travelling expenses and engineers wages. Page costs are usually reviewed from time to time, any increases should be notified in advance.

If your agreement includes toner (ink powder) there may be a written limit to how much you are entitled to and if your printing is excessively heavy on toner expect a surcharge to be applied. There may be agreed minimum page quantities, a standing charge or similar fixed monthly costs.
What’s Included
This is not an exhaustive list, check with your supplier for specifics but usually it will include:

- Periodic preventative maintenance or servicing
- Fault Repairs with priority response times
- Free call-out charges
- Labour as required
- Spare parts - unlimited value
- Consumables (Drum unit, Developer Etc.)
- Black toner – B&W machines only
- Colour toner – may be included if appropriate

What’s Not Included
Colour toner is often charged for in addition but the colour page price reflects this. Generally the ‘Cost per Copy’ may be regarded as comprehensive and indeed most owners never receive any ancillary charges. There are a few minor things that are always excluded and may be worth noting:

- Accidental damage
- Relocation of machine
- Operator Misuse or Abuse
- Delivery charges
- Copy Media (i.e. Paper, Card, Labels, OHPs Etc.)

But surely we’re covered by warranty?
Yes, the Sale of Goods Act applies to office machines just as much as any other product but it doesn’t extend to routine servicing or the cost of running your machine, the toner and other ‘consumables’ that might be needed. Also, unless your supplier offers an ‘on-site’ warranty, the call-out charges would be payable and technical support might not be readily available.
What to look out for

Before signing an agreement you should satisfy yourself that you know:

- The price per page together with any minimum volume expected
- If toner (black & colours) are included or excluded. If other consumables are excluded or chargeable.
- If there is a coverage limit, that will cost extra if exceeded.
- Is there a minimum period length for the agreement

Summary of Benefits

Many attractions are immediately obvious but here is a quick summary including some of the less obvious ones:

- Regular servicing, specified by the manufacturer, ensures continued copy quality
- Routine maintenance reduces down-time and avoids operator’s frustration.
- Expensive damage repair (perhaps as a result of a lack of maintenance) would otherwise be chargeable and can be painfully expensive
- Cost of copying is fixed. Useful if you are charging on or applying to cost centres
- Routine billing aids cash flow. Large service bills (parts or expensive consumables) are avoided
- Priority Engineers response is guaranteed (8 working hours or less)
- Use of a loan copier if parts are unavailable
- Improved trade-in value because of service history
- Pay as you go means you only pay for what you use, after you have used it.
Disadvantages
If your copier never breaks down or breaks down only very rarely it might cost more to have a copy cost contract. If you are not particularly concerned about copy quality and can live with poor copies between chargeable service visits you may save money on a time and materials charging basis.

Cancellation
Our agreements may be cancelled by either Protocopy or the owner by giving 30 days written notice. This is often not the case with many other dealers, check carefully.

Common Misunderstandings
The agreement provides for maintenance only. It is nothing to do with a lease rental or cash acquisition of the machine. If you are considering a lease rental you will need to consider a cost per copy agreement to run alongside the lease.

Plans do exist that combine the cost of buying the machine together with a maintenance element, so all you pay is one fixed price per page but this will be subject to enforced minimum monthly volumes.

Consumer Warranties terms do not usually include the supplier visiting you! It is of course impractical to return bulky machines to the supplier. If you do not enter into a Cost per Copy Agreement you should agree what any warranties offered includes.

If you have a particular question or would like to discuss your needs, please contact us: 0845 18 010 18 or mail@protocopy.co.uk