I don’t speak for the entire food processing community, but I personally have never been a fan of brown bananas. I have heard the stories that they are good for you, but when they go brown, here comes the banana pudding.

Now, let’s make sense of what I just said. In a food processing plant, your most prized asset is your employee base. After that is your fixed assets – the equipment that allows you to produce your products and make a profit. If you have machinery, you have an MRO warehouse where you store your parts that keep your assets humming. Chances are, your turns on these parts from common to made-to-order are less than one per year.

I have spent 35 years in the industrial marketplace, and since I have been with Motion Industries, have been fortunate to tour food plants all over North America. What I have seen in warehousing and maintenance practices is a huge range from the stone age Flintstones to the modern Jetsons. If you are trending toward the Jetsons, that is the right direction and there are many positives to come.

I have been involved with Reliability Centered Maintenance (RCM) for 20 years. My main specialty is determining best warehousing practices to insure inventory is stored properly for the maximum product life. In addition, Brownlee is a reliability expert for protein conversion and wind power. For more information, visit MotionIndustries.com; also see our MiHow2 video on Proper Bearing Handling and Storage (https://tinyurl.com/y8lj8sy).

Brandon Brownlee, Corporate Account Manager for Motion Industries, has been involved with Reliability Centered Maintenance for 20 years. His main specialty is determining best warehousing practices to insulate inventory is stored properly for the maximum product life. In addition, Brownlee is a subject matter expert for protein conversion and wind power. For more information, visit MotionIndustries.com; also see our MiHow2 video on Proper Bearing Handling and Storage (https://tinyurl.com/y8lj8sy).

Don’t Let Your Inventory Become Brown Bananas

Leverage your reliability-centered maintenance (RCM) program to protect your MRO inventory.

...on all of the assets of the facility. The goal of these strategies is to optimize the productivity of the plant using cost-effective maintenance practices.

There are four principles that are critical for a reliability-centered maintenance program:

1. The primary objective is to preserve system function.
2. Identify failure modes that can affect the system function.
3. Prioritize the failure modes.
4. Select applicable and effective tasks to control the failure modes.

I felt we needed a fifth principle: Proper storage of your warehoused MRO items. When we began the project, we found inventory that had not been rotated and out-of-date product. And yes, bearings can deteriorate sitting on a shelf when stored improperly. We found that these improperly stored products could cause, in many cases, immediate failure, unwanted downtime, and on more than one occasion, catastrophic failure.

Now you may think this is not a big issue, but I saw a power plant that had stored two large bore bearings outside, and they became completely ruined. There goes a $250,000 asset. If you operate a food plant, chances are that every morning you meet and determine who or what was responsible for the downtime from the prior day’s production. It is easy to forget about your MRO inventory - it is out of sight and out of mind. It has not been common practice to invest heavily in brick and mortar for warehouses. I have seen some beautiful facilities, but in most cases, storage of MRO inventory is unfortunately an afterthought.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it is not an oncoming train. When you take the time to review how you are storing your spare parts, you are taking the first step to protect your assets and help keep your machinery operating at its full potential. In addition, you are saving your company money.

Motion Industries offers services to help you move toward the Jetsons and protect your company’s assets. Challenge yourself to make sure you are protecting your company’s assets and ask your local Mi Account Representative to show you how he or she can help you keep your plant in Motion.