



Industrial Molds Group

April Newsletter



Mold Warranties - What to expect from your moldmaker

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Offering customers a warranty on the "guaranteed life" of the mold or for the number of shots the mold will produce is something that many mold manufacturers are reluctant to do. High-dollar, complex molds often end up in molding facilities where mold maintenance is an afterthought, rather than a priority. Still, mold manufacturers are often asked to provide a blanket "warranty" on the mold, which means that any warranty they do agree to is often vague.

There are several factors that we consider when we negotiate a warranty on a mold built by Industrial Molds. We look at the complexity of the mold: does it have a lot of actions such as slides, lifters, or unscrewing mechanisms? Does it have a lot of small core pins? How many cavities? And what type of material will be running in the mold? Many of these new engineering grade resins, which many of our customers use in molding their parts, such a glass-filled material can cause more wear on a mold than other types of materials such as unfilled polypropylene, etc.

To put a blanket warranty on every mold we build guaranteeing how long the mold will last isn't good policy. Even the standards set forth by the Society of the Plastics Industry - which the mold industry has been living with forever - don't cover all the bases. Molds are complex pieces of "machinery" that require regular maintenance and careful attention to repairs to ensure that they will continue to mold good parts in optimum cycle times.

Sometimes customers bring us sample parts from a mold we built for them five or 10 years ago, stating that the mold no longer makes conforming parts, and request that we fix the problem under warranty. When we get into the mold, we find that the

problem is often tool wear most likely due to lack of maintenance. We can build an SPI Class 2 mold, for example, that is supposed to get 100,000 shots. When the mold is right at 100,000 or over 100,000 shots, it may no longer make conforming parts. It's difficult as a moldmaker to be responsible for this depending on what the issue that is causing the problem.

Obviously the customer expects the molds they are buying to last to the standard, but there are certain responsibilities the customer, as well as the molder (if the customer doesn't mold in-house) must take on to ensure this. One of those is regular mold maintenance. If you're a custom molder, mold maintenance performed on the molds you run will show your OEM customer that their investment matters. If you're an OEM that does in-house molding, you want to care for your investment to get a good return on it.

No one talks about warranties and guarantees on molds from China, and I've never heard of anyone returning a mold to China when it starts going bad, requesting repairs at no cost. And, you can't put SPI standards on Chinese tooling.

Ultimately, mold standards must be re-evaluated for today's materials, and the responsibility and costs have to be shared between the mold manufacturer and the molder or OEM. One thing we suggest is contacting Tooling Docs, a company in Ashland, OH, that offers a Maintenance Capability Assessment (MCA) program. Randy Winton, Global Assessment Manager, travels to molding facilities to assess the capabilities of molders to maintain molds.

Winton develops an MCA score card that scores molders from 1-5 on their level of maintenance capabilities. Winton then creates a concise report on what the molder is good at and what needs improvement with respect to its mold maintenance procedures. As a mold builder, we can then evaluate our level of risk in providing a warranty to the customer based on the results of the MCA.

As a mold manufacturer specializing in complex, high-quality molds, we can feel much more comfortable giving you a warranty on your molds if you have been scored through Tooling Docs' MCA program. It mitigates our risk as a moldmaker, and helps you establish a better maintenance program to keep your investment in good condition.

An example of a mold warranty has been developed by Progressive Components to serve as a template to help mold manufacturers create warranties to suit their specific circumstances. If you would like to review a copy of this mold warranty template, we'd be happy to provide you with one. Just contact Taryn at customer.service@industrialmolds.com.

Advantages of Mold Maintenance Programs

An article in Injection Molding Magazine pointed out the benefits of having a formal program for regularly scheduled mold maintenance and why it matters. It's important to everyone, and can keep costs-to-manufacture lower. Five advantages were listed in the article.

- 1) Maintaining molds increases productivity, cavitation, and uptime.
- 2) It supports your company's quality efforts, like ISO compliance, Lean manufacturing and Zero defects.
- 3) It encourages the "trust factor" among your customers.
- 4) It reinforces your customer service and sales activities.
- 5) It reduces the cost and headaches of non-performing tooling.

You can schedule a Maintenance Capability Assessment by contacting Tooling Docs at 1-800-257-8369.

Sincerely,

Industrial Molds, Inc.

