

White Paper

Identifying Qualified Service

Providers to Optimize Power Reliability

ASCO[®]



In a world that now relies on immediate data access and transfer, proper maintenance of power equipment has become increasingly important in ensuring power availability. An increased number of service providers now compete for this work, including building maintenance firms that, in turn, retain companies to maintain transfer switches and other critical power equipment. Without proper evaluation of service vendors, your equipment could be serviced by someone who could compromise the availability and safety of power systems in your facility.

Selecting an appropriate service provider can determine how well you fulfill your organization's promises to its customers. By documenting answers to the following questions, you can verify whether a vendor can provide high-quality services at favorable costs.

Questions for Evaluating Service Providers

- 1 Can the firm reliably deliver round-the-clock service?
- 2 How are technicians qualified to service your critical power equipment?
- 3 Have technicians been trained and authorized by the manufacturer of your equipment?
- 4 How do technicians learn of changing products and practices?
- 5 What spare parts do technicians carry for your equipment?
- 6 What safety protocols will technicians observe?

1 Can the firm reliably deliver round-the-clock service?

A service firm should be ready and able to commit all of the necessary resources to solve equipment problems, regardless of the day or time. To evaluate readiness and ability, it's important to understand how the provider will contact and direct people when needed. Verify whether a provider operates a managed call center 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Ask the provider to document the time that will be required to dispatch a technician and the time required for a technician to arrive at your site, even on weekends and holidays. In addition, ask for written call handling, response and escalation procedures, then ask to meet some of the firm's staff and managers to review this information.

2 How are technicians qualified to service your critical power equipment?

The increase in sole-source firms has resulted in the merger of some power equipment service organizations, resulting in fewer qualified technicians. Consequently, the first person arriving to your site may not be trained to repair your facility's specific type, brand, and model of automatic transfer switch and other critical power equipment.

To ensure the availability of mission-critical and life safety systems, a provider should document how its technicians receive the proper training and technical support. In addition, ask the provider to document how its technicians have been qualified to service the actual equipment that is present in your facility, and how they have been trained to understand the effect of each component on the performance of the larger system.

3 Have technicians been trained and authorized by the manufacturer of your equipment?

A service provider should document that its technicians have received factory-sponsored training and are currently authorized to service the exact equipment in your facility. If a provider cannot prove an official relationship with the manufacturer of your automatic transfer switch and power equipment, its technicians may be unable to access the latest maintenance, test, and repair procedures. To best protect your customers, your facility and yourself, ask the provider to document the current status of its relationship with any manufacturer it claims to represent.

4 How do technicians learn of changing products and practices?

A qualified technician will be aware of the latest information pertaining to the performance and reliable operation of your automatic transfer switch and critical power equipment. Ask the firm to document how it provides its technicians and their managers with access to the latest engineering change notices, service alerts, and technical bulletins. A lack of important technical information or procedures has caused more than one major system failure.



5 What spare parts do technicians carry for your equipment?

Some service firms do not stock essential spare parts. Instead, these companies must obtain parts from the manufacturer for every service event, including emergency repairs. This could lead to extended downtime for your mission-critical systems and disruption of your business operations. You can avoid this outcome by verifying a provider's ability to quickly access replacement parts for all of your critical equipment.

6 What safety protocols will technicians observe?

Service vendors can have the same impact on safety and reliability as your organization's own personnel. In addition, most facility managers require switchgear testing and maintenance that will not interrupt power availability and business operations. The necessary work can be accomplished safely by observing the safety practices specified in NFPA 70E, the Standard for Electrical Safety in the Workplace and IEEE 1584 - Guide for Performing Arc-Flash Hazard Calculations, as well as in the OSHA CFR 1910 and 1926 workplace and construction safety regulations. These standards and regulations specify equipment and procedures for minimizing safety risks associated with accessing, testing, maintaining, and repairing transfer switches and power equipment.

An organization can be found negligent if its work practices do not conform to the specified NFPA, IEEE, and OSHA standards. Liability for accidents and outages can extend beyond the service firm to facility owners and operators. To ensure safety and avoid liability, ask the provider to document how its work practices comply with the NFPA, IEEE, and OSHA standards and requirements. For additional information, see our White Paper entitled "[Safety When Servicing Energized Switchgear](#)".

To obtain our white papers and receive additional information regarding service quality issues, call 800-800-ASCO (2726) or visit www.ascoservices.com.

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