

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN AIR QUALITY SERVICE ENGINEER

Marius Barbulescu has been a service engineer at Air Monitors for over 4 years. He says that the best thing about his job is that every day is different, so this article will describe the many functions of a service engineer, without focusing on one individual day.



Background

Marius is Romanian by birth and prior to joining Air Monitors, he spent 7 years working with the Romanian national network of air quality monitoring stations. He travelled to the UK after his wife secured a job working as a nurse for the NHS, and was delighted to find a role with Air Monitors that enabled him to utilise the skills and experience that he had gained in Romania.

Based from home in Sheffield, Marius is responsible for servicing, maintaining, repairing and calibrating air quality monitoring stations in parts of the north of England. This work covers national networks and reference stations, as well as AQMesh pods. As part of a growing nationwide team of 10 engineers, Marius's work is coordinated from Air Monitors' head office in Tewkesbury.

What are your main roles?

Routine service work for air quality monitors starts with a check that readings are accurate, although this can often be achieved remotely where web-enabled communications are fitted. However, the engineers carry gas and particulate standards as well as a flow meter and an ozone generator, so that the accuracy of readings can be assessed onsite. Consumable parts such as o-rings, seals and filters are replaced during a normal service. Air Monitors engineers also carry laptops and PAT testers, so a full suite of tests are undertaken to check the condition and performance of all instruments. In most cases, minor repairs can be conducted using the equipment and spares that are stocked in each engineer's van. However, in some cases, it may be necessary to return the instrument to Tewkesbury for more major work. In these circumstances, many customers have a contract which includes the use of loan instruments whilst equipment is away for repair. Similarly, some customers have a 'Hot Spares' contract under which Air Monitors guarantees the provision of spares within 72 hours. In addition to service work, Air Monitors' engineers are also responsible for new installations. Marius believes that this is a particularly important aspect of the job because it enables him to ensure that instruments are located and installed correctly, and

configured to meet the specific requirements of the customer. With the eye of a service engineer, it also enables him to ensure that installations facilitate simple ongoing maintenance and calibration.

One of the reasons for the variety in Marius's work is that he is also available for call-outs when customers request an urgent site visit. This means that whilst head office manages his travel plans to minimise non-productive, fuel-consuming driving time, he might find himself in Newcastle one day and in Manchester the next. Nevertheless, call-outs generally involve less time, because whilst most sites have between 1 and 6 analysers, a call-out is generally only for one of them.

What are the best parts of the job?

Marius now has a young son, so family time is important and the flexibility of his job enables him to create a good work/life balance. As part of a team, Marius is able to discuss common issues (via WhatsApp) with his colleagues, but he manages his own time, which he says is a major advantage.

For Marius, one of the more enjoyable aspects of the job is the rate at which Air Monitors has been growing. This means that new contracts are being won and new products are being developed, which results in an even greater variety of work. The company has recently been acquired by ACOEM and Marius believes that, as a larger group with greater resources, this will enhance the capability of the services that can be provided and create even better job prospects for the future.

Another feature of a rapidly growing, profitable group is the ability to invest in training and resources. This is particularly important for Marius because it is vital for him to have the appropriate skills, equipment and spares when on-site.

What are the worst parts of the job?

Marius had to think long and hard to answer this question, but eventually he smiled and said: "rain... and maybe not having three arms."

What changes do you foresee in the future?

With regard to air quality monitoring technology Marius has observed enormous changes in recent years. Monitors have become more reliable, smaller and easier to work with. Power requirements have dropped, service intervals have grown, and advances in communications mean that many issues can be resolved remotely. In addition, the value of data has grown as it becomes easier to share. With this in mind, one might suspect that less service engineers will be required, but Marius believes that the opposite is more likely. Politicians, the media and the public are growing increasingly concerned with air quality, so the thirst for data, and especially local data, is growing. At the same time, AQMesh pods have made it possible to obtain good quality data in almost any location at a relatively low cost, so, as has happened with Breathe London which now has over 100 pods, the number of monitors in the UK is growing exponentially.

Looking forward, Marius believes that the rapid growth in the number of air quality monitoring locations, coupled with web-based availability of hyperlocal data, will mean that citizens will start to include air quality in their everyday decisions, such as which travel routes to take, where to play, which school to attend and even where to buy a house.

Summary

As Managing Director of ACOEM Air Monitors, Felicity Sharp believes that service engineers are fundamentally important to the ongoing growth and success of the company. "As part of the ACOEM Group, we are focused on the development and utilisation of instruments that offer accurate, reliable, cost-effective data. By investing in the training and support equipment that our engineers need, we can ensure that our customers benefit from minimal downtime and long-term reliable data.

"As our business continues to grow, we are always looking for new talent to join Marius and the rest of the service team."

Based in the UK, Air Monitors is part of the ACOEM Group, which specialises in products and services that help companies and public authorities reduce their environmental impact by preventing and controlling air, noise and vibration pollution.

Air Monitors provides monitoring solutions which encompass advanced technologies and services. The company's market leading services include technical support, maintenance, calibration, operation, analysis and reporting services in addition to the sale or hire of monitoring equipment. Typical applications include the monitoring of particulate matter and gaseous pollutants in both workplace and ambient air.

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