

Maintenance Planner interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for maintenance planner roles typically assess your ability to organise work, communicate with stakeholders, and use a CMMS effectively. You may be asked to demonstrate your scheduling process, handle a scenario, or explain how you ensure safety compliance.

- **Technical:** Questions about CMMS software, scheduling methods, and asset management.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about how you have handled prioritisations, conflicts, or deadlines.
- **Scenario:** Situations involving breakdowns, shutdowns, or resource shortages.
- **Process:** Walk-through of your planning and scheduling steps.
- **Safety:** How you integrate safety into maintenance planning.

Interviews often start with a phone screen, followed by a panel interview with the maintenance manager and a planner. You may be given a technical exercise using a sample work request or CMMS data. Site tours are common to see the plant and meet the trades.

1. Walk us through how you build a weekly maintenance schedule from work requests.

Why they ask

This tests your core planning process and whether you can balance competing demands systematically.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: start with backlog review, prioritise by criticality, check resource availability, allocate labour and parts, then publish and communicate the schedule.

Example answer

"First, I review all open work requests in the CMMS and group them by asset criticality and compliance requirements. I check the backlog for any overdue safety or statutory tasks and prioritise those. Then I look at available labour, parts, and contractor availability for the week. I meet with operations to identify production windows where planned work can be done without impacting output. After that, I allocate specific jobs to trades, ensuring the right skills and parts are lined up. Finally, I publish the schedule and run a pre-start meeting to confirm everyone knows what is planned and to flag any last-minute issues."

2. Tell me about a time when you had to manage conflicting priorities between operations and maintenance.

Why they ask

This assesses your stakeholder management and ability to balance production pressure with asset reliability.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, the task, the action you took, and the result. Focus on how you communicated and found a solution.

Example answer

"In a previous role, operations wanted to defer a critical conveyor inspection to meet a production target, but the inspection was overdue and safety-critical. I scheduled a meeting with the operations supervisor and the maintenance supervisor to explain the risk and the compliance requirement. We agreed to a short window during a planned changeover, which allowed the inspection to go ahead without stopping production. I then updated the schedule and informed all parties. As a result, the inspection was completed on time, and we avoided a potential failure that could have caused several

days of downtime.”

3. You are planning a major shutdown and a critical part is delayed. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under pressure and your ability to adapt plans when resources are constrained.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess impact, explore alternatives, communicate, and adjust the plan. Show you can stay calm and prioritise safety and critical path work.

Example answer

“First, I would check if the part is truly critical for the shutdown or if there is a workaround, such as using a refurbished part or borrowing from another site. I would contact the supplier to get a firm delivery date and explore expedited shipping. If the delay is unavoidable, I would resequence the shutdown work to complete other tasks first and keep the trades productive. I would then communicate the change to operations and the shutdown team, and update the schedule in the CMMS. If the part is essential for safety, I would escalate to the maintenance manager to decide whether to postpone that part of the shutdown.”

4. How do you ensure data accuracy in the CMMS?

Why they ask

This checks your attention to detail and understanding that reliable data underpins good planning.

How to structure your answer

Describe your process for updating records, auditing, and training others. Mention specific checks and follow-up actions.

Example answer

“I treat the CMMS as the single source of truth, so I make sure every work order is closed out with accurate notes, parts used, and labour hours. I conduct regular audits of asset registers to check that equipment details, maintenance strategies, and histories are up to date. When I find errors, I correct them immediately and follow up with the trades to understand why they occurred. I also run short training sessions for new users on how to enter data correctly. This keeps planning decisions based on reliable information.”

5. How do you incorporate safety into maintenance planning?

Why they ask

This assesses your safety awareness and how you prioritise compliance in the schedule.

How to structure your answer

List the steps you take: permits, risk assessments, isolation, compliance checks. Emphasise that safety-critical work is never deferred without review.

Example answer

“Safety is the first filter when I plan any job. I check that the work request includes a risk assessment and that any required permits, such as confined space or hot work, are identified. I schedule isolations and lockout/tagout procedures with the operations team to ensure equipment is safe to work on. I also make sure that statutory inspections and safety-critical maintenance are given priority in the schedule and are never deferred without a formal risk review. Before work starts, I confirm that the trades have the necessary safety documentation and that the area is prepared.”

6. How do you handle pushback from operations when scheduling planned work?

Why they ask

This tests your communication and negotiation skills, and your ability to maintain relationships while keeping the plan on track.

How to structure your answer

Conflict resolution approach: listen, explain, find compromise, escalate if needed. Show you can stay professional and focused on the shared goal.

Example answer

"I start by listening to their concerns and understanding the production pressure they are under. Then I explain the consequences of deferring the work, such as increased risk of breakdown or compliance issues. I look for a compromise, such as scheduling the work during a planned changeover or breaking it into smaller tasks that can be done during short windows. If we cannot agree, I escalate to the maintenance manager and operations manager to make a joint decision. I always document the outcome and adjust the schedule accordingly."