

SUMMARY

General points to remember for ORGAN BLOWING BEST PRACTICE

Consult	Always include the pipe organ builder in any work to the pipe organ.
Maintain	The replacement of a failed blowing plant can be extremely expensive. Regular planned maintenance is vital. Generally you get what you pay for but be aware that some companies may overcharge. Obtain a competitive quotation detailing the scope of the work and compare like with like .
Standards	Use only competent electrical contractors. All mains wiring should comply with BS7671.
Advice	Seek advice from your Diocesan Organ Advisor or Independent Organ Advisor.
Estimate	Use only suitably competent companies. Details of competent companies may be obtained from The IBO and the ISOB (www.isob.co.uk)

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ORGAN BLOWING BEST PRACTICE

General Advice on Organ Blowing Apparatus

A pipe organ needs some source of wind supply to work. This may be provided by means of a system of cranks or more likely by some form of electrically driven fan. Without a supply of wind the pipe organ is silent.

This important fact is often forgotten until there is a problem with the wind raising system, usually caused by inadequate maintenance. It is therefore vital that regular planned maintenance is carried out for long trouble free service. Repairs to pipe organ blowing plants can be expensive and could often be saved by regular preventative maintenance.

Pipe organ blowers vary in size and complexity from small units capable of blowing a small chamber organ to large multi-stage units necessary for blowing large concert and cathedral instruments. A one size fits all strategy is not possible, however, each installation will have many common features.

EXISTING BLOWING PLANT

Most blowing plants are associated with instruments that have given good service for many years. The blower may be sited in the top of the church tower or buried down in the crypt or may be sited within the organ case.

These three possible locations cover the majority of installations. Out of sight out of mind is often the reason why a blowing plant is neglected and fails. Regular inspection at least once a year should be the minimum requirement. Some large cathedral blowing plants will need more frequent attention.

All maintenance work should be carried out by a suitably trained and qualified person employed by the pipe organ builder or specialist pipe organ blowing company. Well intended amateur work may result in a larger final cost than calling in the experts.

Any work to the mains electrical supply that powers the blower motor should be carried out by a competent person and all AC mains electrical wiring should comply with British Standard 7671.

Some pipe organ builders include general blower maintenance as part of their standard tuning service. Alternatively a separate contract may exist with a specialist company. What is important is that the blower receives regular planned maintenance designed to prevent mechanical and electrical failure.

HUMIDIFYING PLANTS

In addition to the pipe organ blowing plant the pipe organ may have a humidifying system. Normally a humidifying system will have been installed by a specialist company and subject to a separate maintenance agreement.

Failure to maintain a humidifying plant may cause damage to the fabric of the church and the pipe organ. Any work should be carried out by a competent person.

NEW ORGAN PLANT

Occasionally an existing blowing system will need to be replaced. This may be because the existing plant has failed from poor maintenance, or the pipe organ has been extended and the existing blowing system is inadequate.

The installation of a new blowing system should be the overall responsibility of the pipe organ builder. Attention to correct size and site conditions should be taken into account to ensure that the new installation is fit for purpose. This may include special conditions relating to noise levels.

All new blowing plants should be designed to allow regular maintenance.

USED, OR SECOND-HAND BLOWERS

As an alternative to installing a new blower, a used or second-hand blower may be considered as a practical and economic solution. Attention to size, quality and overall suitability should be considered before a final commitment is made to fit the used blower.

The final decision must rest with the pipe organ builder

NEW ORGANS

Normally a new pipe organ will be supplied with a new blower fitted with modern low maintenance bearings. The new pipe organ design should allow free and easy access to the new blowing plant which may be maintained by the pipe organ builder or by a specialist company.

ASBESTOS

Asbestos is occasionally found in blower cabinets, where it was installed as both sound-proofing and to provide fire-protection. While the incidence of asbestos is rare, care should be taken when opening cabinets for blower maintenance and if material resembling asbestos is found then the organ builder should be contacted and informed of the situation.

Within organ building there is no standard method for dealing with asbestos. However, the organ builder will be aware of any local procedures and be best placed to supervise any work carried out by specialist contractors so that no damage is caused to the fabric of the organ.

Please refer to the IBO leaflet on asbestos for further information if necessary.