

The Importance of Thermal Barcode Printer Preventative Maintenance

If you want to ensure that you keep your thermal printer functioning to the best of its ability it is important to keep your printer clean and free from dust and other debris. An increased amount of dust and debris can cause problems and prevent your thermal barcode printer working properly.

MCC offers a **Preventative Maintenance Service**, on-site or via our return to base service, performing the following tasks:

- Clean printer of settled dust and other debris
- Check and clean print-head
- Check platen roller for damage/wear and clean if necessary
- Check drive belt (if applicable)
- Check label path for adhesive/label residue and clean if necessary
- Adjust printer setup if necessary (e.g. head pressure, media guides etc)
- If any parts are required to be replaced we confirm with you prior to replacement, or schedule it for replacement another time

Support: If you are having printer trouble, please get in touch with our service technicians on **0800 865 223** or email vipsupport.nz@mcclabel.com

Media Supplies: If you need labels, tags, tickets or ribbons please call our customer services hub on **0800 865 223** or email thehubalbany@mcclabel.com

Tips and Facts for Thermal Barcode Printer Maintenance

1. Common printer alerts:

If your thermal printer has an error, check the indicated error alert message against the printer's troubleshooting pages in the user's guide.

Often there is a quick reference QR code label on the inside of the printer or a QR code appears on the printer's screen when in error state. Scanning this QR code with your mobile device will direct you to the correct support page for your model printer.

Common errors:

- **Communication Error – printer not printing:**
 1. Check printer is not in error state/paused
 2. Check alerts on screen or LED indicator light/s
 3. Check USB or Network connectivity is setup correctly and communicating to printer
 - 4a. For USB connectivity: Try plugging the USB cable into another USB port on your computer
 - 4b. For Ethernet: check IP address is correct
 - 4c. For Wifi: check wifi router, signal strength, security settings
- **Paper out / media not calibrating:**
 1. Check printer driver settings vs actual printer settings
 2. Check media and ribbon is loaded correctly (best practice is to reload all)
 3. Follow diagrams labelled inside the printer

• Print quality issues – fading or patchy:

1. Check print-head and platen roller are clean and not damaged
2. Check printer driver setting vs actual printer settings
3. Check correct media and/or ribbon combination has been loaded in your printer
4. Direct Thermal vs Thermal Transfer settings
5. Wax or wax/resin or resin ribbon may be required for specific media substrates and changes to the speed and darkness setting may be required

2. Extend the life of your printer's print-head:

The print-head is the most critical component in your thermal printer, and possibly the most delicate.

It is a consumable item which eventually wears over time. However, with ongoing careful attention and maintenance, you can extend the life of the print-head and ultimately your thermal printer.

One of the greatest failures in print-heads is because they have not been cleaned regularly or they are damaged.

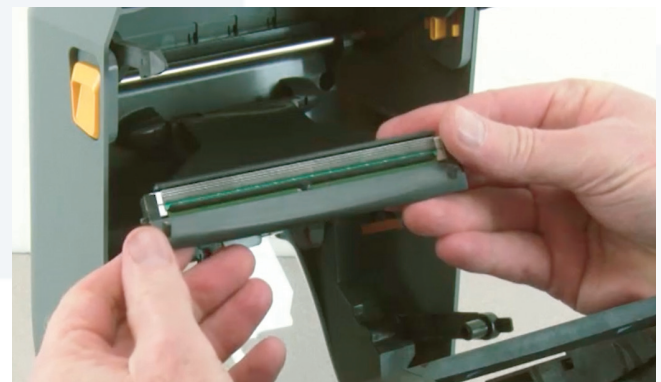
Always keep scissors, knives, watches and jewelry away from the print-head which has a ceramic coating, as this can be chipped.

Static discharge can also damage the print-head elements when touching the print-head.

The print elements are on the silver strip just behind the chrome strip on the print-head. When closed, you will see the element strip sits on the crest of the platen roller.

Best practice is to clean the print-head every time you replace a roll of media and/or ribbon.

Follow the instructions in your Printer's User Guide as to the type of cleaning solvent to be used for your specific model. Most often, high % Isopropanol wipes or swabs are recommended.



Desktop Print-head

3. Heat/darkness and speed setting setup:

If your thermal printer is melting through ribbons, printing very faintly, or your direct thermal media has barcodes too light/dark, you may want to check your User's Guide for the recommended heat/ darkness and speed settings.

Each printer will have a default setting when switched on for the first time or after a default reset.

In most cases, these settings would be a good starting point during initial print quality setup, however different media substrate

and ribbon combinations will require different settings and it is best practice to set your printer up specifically for each type or combination of media.

Inferior media and ribbon supplies can cause the printer to be setup incorrectly when trying to achieve a reasonable print quality. This can reduce the life of the print-head and printer.

4. Dust vs the media sensor:

Dust residing on the media sensor can cause calibration and media out alerts.

The media sensor ensures that the gap between the paper and the print-head remains constant.

A soft bristle brush or canned air will usually clear out any dust residue left over from the media.

A few quick brushes or blasts of air directed at the media sensor should keep your media sensor dust free.

We recommend doing this every time you change the ribbon or a roll of media. It will only take a few seconds and it will ensure more up-time.

5. Thermal transfer printers – ribbon quality:

If you are using a ribbon in your thermal printer, be sure that it is a good quality ribbon.

Lower cost ribbons are often not manufactured to the exact wax and/or resin specifications and can cause residue build-up on the print-head and platen roller.

Residue build-up can cause poor print quality resulting in barcode reliability and print quality issues.

A good rule of thumb when purchasing new ribbons for your thermal transfer printer, is to purchase a ribbon that is slightly wider than the actual labels that you are using. For instance, if the label that you are using is 101mm in width, then you may want to consider purchasing ribbon that is 110mm in width. This extra width will help keep lubrication on the print-head and help extend your print-head life.

6. Direct thermal printers – media quality:

If you are using a direct thermal printer and you are having problems with ongoing defective print-heads, consider using a better quality direct thermal media (top sheet coated).

Top coated direct thermal media will provide a smooth layer for the print-head to rest on and can greatly extend the life of your thermal print-head.

Uncoated, budget direct thermal media does not have this coating and causes higher friction against the print-head and increased wear and tear.

Print-heads are a costly consumable and using higher quality media reduces the number of print-head changes.

7. Cleaning the print-head, platen roller and media path:

To keep your thermal printer running at its optimum, it is good practice to clean regularly with each media and ribbon change.

Basic cleaning steps:

- Switch off printer
- Open the print-head and remove the media and ribbon (if loaded)
- Brush / vacuum / canned air blast any accumulated lint and dust away from the rollers and media path
- Use an Isopropanol pre-saturated wipe or swab and wipe along the print elements from end to end (left and right as you face the printer).
- Rotate the platen roller and clean thoroughly with Isopropanol swab/wipe
- Clean any adhesive build up from the media path and tear bar
- Allow a few seconds for the Isopropanol to evaporate from cleaned areas
- Reload printer with media supplies
- Turn on printer



IPA Soaked Pen



IPA Soaked Cloths

Cleaning Supplies:

406097: IPA Soaked Synthetic Cleaning Cards

Box of 25

483465: IPA Soaked Cleaning Wipes - Box of 25

Box of 25

403807: IPA Soaked Cleaning Swab - Box of 50 (PreSat)

Foam head sealed in a bag 125mm handle

403807: IPA Soaked Felt Tip Cleaning Pen - For Printheads

Individual