**Infrared Technology Heats Up**  
*by Michael Newbury*

As infrared diagnostic systems have advanced in recent years, many engineering and maintenance managers have begun rolling this technology into their technician training programs. The cost of many imaging tools has dropped, and their reliability has increased, making infrared technology a viable component of a facility’s program to ensure power quality.

Infrared thermography cameras produce images of invisible infrared, or heat, radiation, and they enable technicians to produce precise, non-contact temperature measurements. This technology allows maintenance and engineering technicians to gauge potential heat-related issues, such as loose electrical connections, they cannot detect through visual inspection of the equipment. If not addressed, these issues could cause facility downtime or endanger the safety of building occupants and technicians.

Current camera technologies and infrared software programs also offer built-in digital visual cameras, handheld devices, and guided reporting.

For example, one software provider offers a program that replicates a predictive maintenance inspection database from the server to a personal digital assistant or tablet computer in the field. Using this software, technicians can enter information about problems they observe and report the test status of each piece of equipment directly into the database.

After the inspection, they can upload that information and immediately share it over the company’s intranet using dynamic web technology. Users they can print and distribute hard-copy reports. The database also can share information with department’s computerized maintenance management systems and other predictive maintenance programs.

Of course, managers first need to understand their departments’ needs. All of these bells and whistles come at a cost and would not benefit every facility. — *Michael Newbury*