

## Metallograph<sup>®</sup> Printed Electronics

### 6 Tips to Get the Most from Your Thermal Printhead

[Adapted from IIMAK Blog, 17 June 2019](#)<sup>1</sup>

The printhead enables us to print not just barcode labels, but also printed electronics by thermal transfer technology. Cleaning your printhead might be the last on your to-do list when changing out your ribbon, but it's a must to get the best from your thermal printer!

Often we forget to take care of this integral component and end up with premature failure due to printhead buildup. The first sign of buildup is lines in the print. If not cleaned, the damage becomes permanent and the costly printhead is gone too soon. That's why cleaning your printhead regularly can help increase the lifespan of your printer and ensure your printing comes out crisp every time it's used.

**To maximize the life of your thermal printhead, follow these guidelines:**

#### **#1 - Check your thermal printer settings**

When operators see print problems, they often increase the pressure and darkness (heat) settings. This stress contributes to premature printhead failure. Instead, clean the printhead to clear the debris blocking printhead elements before adjusting printer settings.

#### **#2 - Clean your printhead at every ribbon and substrate change**

OEM's recommend using isopropyl alcohol wipes at each ribbon change. For Metallograph<sup>®</sup> we recommend at least this frequently. Given the hassle and potential wastage from inattention, it should not be considered inconvenient or time consuming.

#### **#3 - The ribbon should be slightly wider than the substrate (including liner)**

The ribbon's backcoat is designed to glide over the head. Nearly all labels and electronic printing substrates are abrasive to the printhead and cause excessive wear from direct, prolonged contact.

#### **#4 - Don't touch the printhead**

The printhead is a sophisticated electronic component. Don't touch the printhead, and don't attempt to clean it with abrasive cleaning wipes unless you are ready to replace it anyway. See #2.

#### **#5 - Use high quality substrate**

Poor quality labels can have excessive adhesive that accelerates build-up.

#### **#6 - Don't forget to clean your printhead**

Your thermal heads will last longer with regular attention.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iimak.com/About-IIMAK/News/Blog/2019/06/17/6>