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SAFETY MATTERS

Open communication and constant attention to the details—however small they may seem—are the first steps toward achieving workplace safety.

What is safety? According to my *Funk & Wagnall's*, safety is “freedom from danger or injury.” Wouldn't it be great if we could achieve this in our workplace? In reality, it seems that all we can hope for is to improve our chances by eliminating most of the dangers we encounter. I define safety as an ongoing, never-ending program to reduce danger, with the intent of eliminating any and all conditions that could cause injury of any sort. This is a longwinded way of saying that everybody should keep their eyes open for dangerous conditions. It is often easier to identify dangerous conditions than it is to actually do something about them. Frequently, when an accident occurs, someone says “I knew this was going to happen.” My reaction to this is: “for God's sake, why didn't you do something to stop it?”

Now I know that it's difficult to “tell” on your fellow workers, or to convince them that the practice or procedure they are following is dangerous, but consider this: Wouldn't it be a good thing if, by informing someone in authority or insisting that a practice be changed, you were able to save a friend or fellow worker from serious injury? There is an old movie starring Paul Newman as a prisoner in which the line “what we have here is a failure to communicate” is spoken, and this has almost become a slang term in our vocabulary. To my mind, a lack of communication is the most difficult obstacle to overcome in safety. We managers need to convince all

of our company's employees that pointing out potentially dangerous practices only leads to respect and gratitude, and that no one should be concerned about being viewed as a “troublemaker.” Too often I see managers ignore or even denigrate an honest attempt to point out a potential problem. We have to be very careful of this attitude, even though sometimes we can't actually solve the problem. Let's all try to develop an attitude that is conducive to real communication as it relates to safety.

I will now get off my soapbox and try to give you some information on source materials that you may find helpful.

The AMT—which, due to my age, I still think of as NMTBA—offers some very good training films for rent or purchase. The two I would highly recommend are *Safeguarding of Machine Tools* and *GearCutting Fundamentals*.

The OSHA Web site [www.osha.gov] regularly publishes news releases that pertain to information that we all should know about. I suggest that you bookmark this site and visit it periodically for the very latest information. If you are not online, the phone number is (202) 219-8151, and these releases are also available by regular mail.

The Electrical Standard for Metal-working Machine Tools is another great source of information. This publication (NFPA 79) is produced by the National Fire Protection Association and is American National Standards Institute approved No. C113.1. This book is very handy, and I recommend it highly.

A company called **Intec**, at (717) 342-8464, offers a Hazard Awareness Training program that incorporates at least two very good sections for our industry, the first being First Aid in the Workplace, and the other being Heat Stress. The last one occurs to me as I write this column during our first heat wave. These programs are offered as employer run in-house training, with the literature furnished along with tests to measure what was retained.

The last item that we all need to consider this month is forklift driving. In most of the smaller gear shops that I visit, it's common that, whenever there is a skid or large box to be moved, whoever is handy jumps on a forklift to move the item. Usually the only training that has occurred is how to start it and what all the levers do. We need to be sure that forklifts are being used safely. There is a requirement enforced by OSHA for the licensing of forklift drivers, so it would behoove us all to provide safety training to any employee we expect to drive a forklift. 🚧

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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