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SAFETY MATTERS

The potential for physical injury presents itself from all angles in the industrial workplace. Safety professionals should consider all the potential dangers when developing a plan for the New Year.

I sincerely hope that all the readers of *Gear Solutions*, and of this column, have had a joyful and happy holiday season. When I consider this season and all the reasons that we have to be thankful, I can't help but think of those who are less fortunate, particularly employees who have been injured in a workplace accident and can't enjoy the season as the rest of us do. While we should still enjoy ourselves, one of our New Year's resolutions should be to make workplace safety a number-one priority in 2004. A good first step in this process would be to take a few minutes to assess the conditions in our shop. I recently read an article that promoted the idea of the manager or owner of a business taking a two-day sabbatical, going to a motel alone, and simply concentrating on their business plan for the coming year. While I am not suggesting that we all take a couple of days with no interruptions to contemplate safety, I believe that it's definitely worth at least a couple of hours of concentrated thought. If we can make our workplace safer by something so simple as improving the storage of blanks and cut parts, or making aisles more accessible, or providing a better way to handle chips, or just cleaning the work areas better, we will make our employees happier, safer, and better producers—and with a minimum of cost and effort.

I'm a little behind on my reading, but I ran across something interesting not long ago. Most gear shops that I've visited have a band saw of some sort on the premises. It usually doesn't get a lot of use, but it's a machine that's typically there for anyone to use as they need it. In the July/August issue of *Machining* magazine there is an article titled "Refresher on Bandsaw Safety for Today's Tight Times" that should be of value to all of us who occa-

sionally use this machine. The article was written by Marty Weldman, of Bahco-Milford Bandsaws, and I recommend it.

I was also informed just recently that our friends at OSHA have changed some of the requirements for recording and reporting work-related injuries. One or more of the changes may affect your shop, so please take the time to check with them, since it could save you considerable money in fines.

One of the changes that I'm aware of has to do with the definition of a "small business," so you might want to learn more about that.


The magazine's Spotlight this month is on "noise analysis." While this subject deals with end-product and maintenance, noise can be a safety hazard that is easily overlooked. Metal cutting, including gear hobbing and shaping, is an inherently noisy process, and our employees must be protected. We must, at the very minimum, provide hearing protection

to all of our employees who are on the floor of the shop. I realize that each employee has a different level of tolerance to noise, and that some employees refuse to wear protection, but it must be made available and recommended by management. Another aspect of workplace noise that can be overlooked is that created by hob sharpening. This noise is often less tolerated than that of hobbing or shaping, and it is a hazard that we must always keep in mind.

Another area covered in this issue is deburring. This process can create a whole new problem in dealing with the hazards involved. First of all, burrs are sharp by definition, and handling of the parts prior to the

deburring process creates a hazard, so good gloves and protective containers are a must. Many of the small gear shops still do all of their deburring by hand, and often on a wire wheel, polishing wheel, or grinding wheel.

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All of these present hazards to the eyes and the hands that must be protected against. Please be sure that your employees have proper protective gear and a secure, safe method of holding the parts during the deburring process. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

With more than 30 years of experience in the gear industry, Terry McDonald is a manager with Repair Parts, Inc., a partner with Re-New Machine & Maintenance, Inc., and a current member and past-chairman of the American National Standards Institute B11.11 Subcommittee on Safety Requirements for Construction, Care, and Use of Gear Cutting Equipment. McDonald writes this monthly column specifically for *Gear Solutions* magazine. He can be contacted through the magazine at editor@gearsolutionsonline.com. Responses and reactions to his column are also welcome.