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SAFETY MATTERS

Make sure that you keep Material Safety Data Sheets on hand and readily available, and use a computer database to document the steps you've taken to increase safety awareness at your company.

Is a safety program an income producer? Of course not, but it does contribute to our infamous "bottom line." An active, documented safety program can and does contribute to a drastic lowering of insurance costs, as well as increasing productive time by lowering time lost due to injuries. You should notice that I specified "documented" safety program, and this has to do with the insurance companies. If you can show your insurance company documented proof of an active effort on your company's part to increase safety, your insurance rates will be improved. The small amount of effort involved in recording your various efforts aimed at improving the safety of your employees will be well worth it in the long run, and in these days of spreadsheets and databases, it hardly takes any time at all.

In the same vein, our friends at OSHA are expecting our yearly report on workplace injuries. Please make sure that you have complied in order to avoid being hit with a fine.

There is a lot of good information that applies to all of us at www.saftgard.com. It seems to be a good resource for keeping up with what's happening with OSHA, NIOSH, and the other various regulatory agencies, and I recommend it.

Gear Solutions is focusing on lubrication in this issue. What does lubrication have to do with safety? Well, in the most unfortunate scenario, the lack of proper lubrication can cause a moving axis of the machine to instantly freeze, and the resulting forces

lubrication, however. Lube oil is a chemical compound that, in the name of better protecting the machines, can have additives that irritate the skin, cause allergic reactions, and just plain smell. We must protect our workers from these hazards, and we must maintain Material Safety Data (MSD) sheets on all of the different oils we use in the shop. Often, we tend to forget to request these sheets from our suppliers because we are in a hurry, we think we already have this information, or we just don't think of it when ordering.

Unfortunately, this leaves us open to some pretty hefty fines if we are reviewed by OSHA. Again, this is a small, low-cost item that must be part of our safety program, and too often it is forgotten. It is something you should emphasize to all your employees who may order any chemicals for your company—always request MSD sheets!

By the way, it is a requirement that the


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MSD sheets be kept on file and in an accessible place for all employees.

Another article this month related to retrieval software. All of the items discussed in this column are items that lend themselves to a system of data-retrieval that is available without having to purchase specific software. With the use of a simple database setup in any of the popular spreadsheets that we all have available, we can document and keep track of our safety programs in a manner that will have the information readily available for any use that be for insurance purposes or

If you have questions concerning such a setup or please contact me through my magazine

site and I will be happy to share my database set-up technique.

One last thought: safety awareness comes in big, unmanageable hunks after an accident occurs. If we all concentrate on the small, individual aspects of a good safety program, then we will keep those big accidents from occurring in the first place. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

With more than 30 years of experience in the gear industry, Terry McDonald is a member with Repair Parts, Inc., a partner with Re-New Machine & Maintenance, Inc., and a member and past-chairman of the American National Standards Institute B11.11 Subcommittee on Safety Requirements for Construction, Care, and Use of Gear