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## SAFETY MATTERS

**Since employees are on the front lines of the manufacturing process, their input is crucial—especially when it comes to safety concerns.**

**“A**m I going to get in trouble if I point out what I think is an unsafe practice? If you are like me and came up through the ranks, so to speak, you probably remember when you had thoughts like this. Is it possible that your fellow employees have the same concerns when they see something that troubles them? I think that this attitude is still prevalent in the workplace. We must convey the message to all of our employees that it is in the best interest of the whole company—which, of course, includes them—to bring any and all safety concerns to the attention of their supervisor. They need to be assured that they will not be chastised or thought less of, and that they will actually be appreciated for their contributions.

I believe that many employees are really concerned that supervisors will see their concerns as a way of getting out of a job or, even worse, that they are slowing down production. They think that they may be considered to be spending too much time looking for problems instead of doing the job they were hired for. We need their input to have the safest possible workplace. We can't expect to find all of the potential hazards that exist without input from all of our employees. I don't mean to say that the employees should be expected to find all of the hazards, or that the reports of hazards from employees should be anything but presented in the best interest of the company. Anyone in a supervisory position of any sort is usually in a better position to see the "whole picture" and act on potential hazards, so their input should be larger but not treated any differently.

What should you do when a potential hazard is presented to you? Do you thank the person for bringing it to your attention? Do

you follow up on the hazard and report back to the original presenter on the progress? Do you make sure that the report is included in that person's personnel file? Do you do all of these things in a timely manner? If we do not do all of these things and more, we are not representing the best interest of our company, and we are allowing a potentially disastrous situation to continue to exist.


Please, once you've convinced your employees that you value their input, follow up on their concerns. It's one of the most important things we can do to improve safety in the workplace.

One of the topics in this month's issue of *Gear Solutions* is saws. We all use saws in our business—some to prepare blanks, and some to finish parts—and I am sure that there are any number of ways that they are used. Many times the saws are treated as merely a secondary tool, and maintenance

consists of changing blades when they are dull and only doing repairs as necessary. Saws can be a very dangerous tool, and the guards are too often taken off because "they are in the way" or because "I didn't have time to put them back." Due to the fact that this is sometimes considered a secondary operation, often the saws are off in a back room or a corner of the shop that is

only visited when someone needs them. This means that an operator is often alone in the saw area, and if they experience a problem, there is no one there to help. We need to address this

issue and make the saw operation a safer part of our overall shop practices.

Did everyone enjoy the various benefits of IMTS? I hope you had the opportunity to attend, and I plan to discuss what I observed from a safety standpoint in next month's column. 

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### 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](mailto:editor@gearsolutionsonline.com). Responses and reactions to his column are also welcome.