



terryMcDONALD

Member of the ANSI Subcommittee on Gear Safety

SAFETY MATTERS

Cold and flu season is upon us, so make a point of encouraging employees to wash their hands frequently, and to stay home if they're sick rather than spreading the virus to others.

I hope that everyone had a very safe and happy holiday season, and that you were finally able to finish off all of the leftovers.

Well, here it is again, the start of another year. And what do we have to look forward to? A summer vacation, or maybe an extended winter holiday on the slopes. Unfortunately, my mind usually goes to more mundane matters—like the fact that it's the glorious start of flu and cold season. Believe it or not, this is a legitimate safety issue in our companies, and this year will be especially tough due to the shortage of flu vaccine, so we need to do everything we possibly can to protect ourselves and our employees. This time of year it is important to provide good wash-up facilities and to promote the frequent washing of hands. We should also provide tissues so that employees have a quick, disposable method of containing any sneezes, coughs, and the like. And it's important to keep the restrooms and wash-up areas clean and germ-free as well.

One area that often gets overlooked is the lunchroom or cafeteria. Many shops allow their employees to eat lunch at their work areas, and this can sometimes cause a problem in terms of cleanliness. We need to promote a clean environment if we want our workers to stay healthy, especially since we all know that colds and the flu can spread through a shop and office at an incredible rate, costing a company many, many dollars in lost production. And after the last few years of slow business, none of us can afford any lost production.

I also think it's important that we convey the message to our employees that, if they

are truly sick with a bad cold or the flu, it is best that they take some time off and stay home to get over their illness rather than spreading it to their fellow employees. No

one can be at their best when they're under the weather, and they can make a dangerous mistake that can cause harm to themselves and to others. Not being able to

work at their normal capacity can also mean wasted time and money due to excess scrap and lost production.

On a different note, I found a terrific Web site that does a good job of explaining the hazards and effects of various metal-cutting fluids, lubricants, and coolants [www.osha.gov/SLTC/metalworkingfluids]. This site deserves your attention, because these fluids are a very real source of potential problems or even danger, and the more we can learn about them, the better off we will be.

"No one can be at their best when they're ill, and they can even make a dangerous mistake when they're under the weather that can cause harm to themselves and to others."

This time of year it's also a good idea to review our record-keeping in regard to safety and accident reporting. I have found that, over the course of a year, it is very

easy to get complacent, or even sloppy in our record keeping. And, believe me, OSHA is not very understanding when it comes to not having the proper records on file. If we go

over our records now—while we can remember and reconstruct any incidents that have occurred over the past 12 months—it will be of tremendous benefit if, and when, we are audited.

I hope that all of you are looking forward to a great 2005, and please feel free to contact me through *Gear Solutions* magazine if I can be of any help to you. 📧

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.