

**It's summer, your workers are taking vacations, and cross-training employees is a good backup plan. In such instances it's especially important to emphasize the safety aspects of an unfamiliar task.**

**H**ow are you enjoying your summer so far? This is the time of year that causes many production difficulties due to vacations and other reasons for employee absence. We can easily understand their reasons, and we really can't expect to change this fact. It happens every year, and it will continue to happen whether we like it or not. Normally we try to cross-train our employees so that production requirements can be met during this season, but when we do so how many of us consider the safety aspects of the job? No one who only does a job occasionally can be expected to understand all of the inherent dangers associated with that particular task. So it's important that when conducting cross-training we emphasize the safety requirements of the job. This is a case, again, for the use of a safety manual that is complete and covers all of the job-related hazards that exist within your facility. Whenever an employee is expected to do a job on a temporary basis, it's a good policy to furnish them with the appropriate section of the manual that deals with the specific tasks they will be required to perform. Even if they are in possession of the complete manual, don't expect them to check the appropriate passages. Make sure that they have read and understand them prior to starting the job. Also, if they've done the job before, don't expect them to remember what they were told then—even if this function was performed recently. This sounds like a lot of extra effort for the supervisors, but if it eliminates one acci-

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dent, it will be well worth the time.

Another “summer issue” that bears repeating is clothing. Everyone likes to be comfortable in warm weather, of course, and this usually involves light, loose-fitting clothing. As we all recognize, this type of clothing can be very dangerous when it's worn around running machinery. We must emphasize this fact to our employees before it becomes an

issue. And remember, wearing this type of clothing is just as hazardous for the supervisors, engineers, or other office employees who may have to assist or instruct an operator on a certain procedure on the shop floor.

I remember that, as a young man, a shop I worked in had a very attractive young woman who worked in the accounting office. Once a day it was part of her duties to operate the commissary during break. This required that she walk the length of the shop to reach the break room. It actually became quite a hazard to the operators, because in the summer she would typically wear short skirts and loose tops. You could watch the heads turning as she made her daily walk. I have to admit that I watched, too. It finally became necessary for the company to place a man in the position of operating the commissary due to the accidents that were being caused. I just point this out because, one, I like the story, and two it brings to light the importance of being observant when, as an employer, you are watching for possible hazards in your facility.

The last summer item I would like to mention is heat-related accidents. It is very important to have an ample supply of cool water on hand for the employees and, if at all possible, a cooling station such as an air conditioned office available for the first sign of overheating or heat exhaustion.

I hope that all of you are having a very nice summer, and that it is stress and accident free. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

With more than 30 years of experience in the gear industry, Terry McDonald is partner and manager of Repair Parts, 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, and he can be reached at (815) 968-4499 or [rpi@repair-parts-inc.com](mailto:rpi@repair-parts-inc.com). The company's Web site is [[www.repair-parts-inc.com](http://www.repair-parts-inc.com)].