

The beginning of a new year is the ideal time to review your safety program, including commonsense procedures such as checking and replenishing your first aid equipment and supplies.

Well, here it is again, another new year. I hope that all of you had a very happy and safe holiday period, and that you're ready to tackle the new year with enthusiasm and plans to improve your workplace safety. Even if we have a safety program in place, we have to realize that with every change in materials, machinery, processes, or personnel, our safety program will require updates. Any safety program worth its salt is a constantly changing and improving program. Often a company creates a safety program and then feels that the requirement has been satisfied, so it is largely ignored from that point forward. We cannot allow that to happen to us. A part of any safety program must include periodic reviews that are taken very seriously. The program will require these updates on a regular basis, with the frequency determined by your own company's changes in the above-mentioned items. If the program is not reviewed at least twice annually, though, then I just don't see how it can be as current and effective as it needs to be.


Another thing that is often ignored is the condition and availability of our first aid supplies and safety equipment. I have seen many instances where the simplest thing, such as a band-aid or ointment, is not there when you need it, and the first of the year is an ideal time to check inventory and restock these items.

I recently had a situation here at our own facility that I think may be a fairly

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common occurrence in everyone's shop. One of my employees came in to work wearing tennis shoes. While this was just a lapse of memory on his part, it can be a very hazardous practice. It was fortunate that I noticed and sent him home to change shoes. Often, our employees don't realize the hazards associated with improper footwear—especially with many of them being young and having been raised wearing tennis shoes. We, as employers, are required to teach them the proper way to dress while at work. I'm not suggesting that a dress code be implemented, but common sense tells us that proper foot protection—as well as eye and hearing protection—are paramount to our employee's well being. I find that I can often miss an item such as proper footwear when observing my employees due to being concerned about what they're doing rather than what they're wearing, so I know that I must train myself to be more observant of these factors.

When I saw that the focus of this month's issue is raw materials, I asked myself what safety issues could be raised that are related to this subject. The first thing I thought of is weight, involving lifting and moving heavy bars of stock. Then I thought about rough finishes that can cause cuts and scrapes. Other dangers include the fact that stock can have oil or other preservative compounds on it that could cause slipping or, even worse, allergic reactions. All of these are legitimate safety concerns when dealing with raw materials. Employees need to be aware of these hazards and taught how to store and handle the materials we receive and use. But raw materials can mean more than just the stock we keep on hand. It can be oils, coolants, and a myriad of different chemicals. This means that our Material Data Safety Sheets must be kept up to date so that if there is a problem that relates to one of these chemicals we can react swiftly and with the proper actions.

That said, I hope that all of you have a happy—and especially a safe—new year! 

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. The company's Web site is [www.repair-parts-inc.com].