

In addition to price and productivity, be sure to factor safety into your considerations while viewing all the new equipment on display at GEAR EXPO next month.

Next month we will be attending GEAR EXPO in Detroit with the expectations of seeing and learning about the latest and greatest technologies for the gear industry. I sincerely hope that it proves to be a successful time for you. I feel that I must issue my usual request for your participation in GEAR EXPO. When you visit the various vendors who will be there, please view their products and equipment with an eye toward the safety aspects of that particular offering. The vendors will be more than happy to furnish you with a description of the safety measures that have been employed in the manufacture and design of their offerings, you just have to ask.

Too often we only look at production improvement versus cost, when we really should be concerned with potential hazards as well. I do plan on visiting the show, and I hope that I'll have the opportunity to meet some of you. If you see me walking around, please don't hesitate to introduce yourself. I would love to get your input on ways to improve this column and make it more valuable to you.

One area of concern that I have with the machines that are being offered today is the placement of the controls for the machines. In these days of CNC type machines, the control panels have expanded exponentially when compared to the "old" manual machines. The controls need to be in easy reach of the


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operator and located so that the operator can view the operation of the machine while maintaining easy and immediate access to the controls. Remember, even CNC machines are not foolproof, and quick action by the operator can prevent costly accidents, so we must insist on proper control placement.

Another concern when purchasing new equipment that we must factor into our decision is training. Does the vendor you're considering include adequate training on the use and maintenance of the machine? When discussing this with your vendor, keep in mind the level of competence of your employees. Many of the new machine vendors are from other countries, and while they may have a good command

of the English language, accents can sometimes present communication challenges. Do the trainers speak so that your employees will have no trouble understanding them? Communication during the training phase of a new machine installation is of paramount importance. As we all know, proper training is a key safety factor on our shop floor.

And while we're on the "language thing," how are the manuals? Instructions that are originally written in another language and then translated into English can sometimes be confusing. We must remember that the English language is loaded with words that have double meanings, and it is therefore a very difficult language to be translated into. Another language concern is the signage on foreign-built machines. Again, this can be a translation problem, but from a safety standpoint we must make sure that hazard warnings have been properly translated. One last concern with the language barrier concerns programming: Is the language clear and easily understandable? Are the pushbuttons marked in an understandable manner?

All machine manufacturers do their best to meet these standards, but we as buyers must be aware of the potential hazards and be prepared to discuss them as we make our decisions on new equipment. So have a great time at the GEAR EXPO, and try to keep safety in mind as you shop. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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