

**One New Year's resolution that should be made, and kept, is to conduct a careful review of your company's safety plan, focusing especially on any changes that have been made over the past year.**

**W**ell, it's the beginning of a new year, and I hope that all of you had a very joyous and happy New Year's celebration. This is the time of year to revisit our safety plan. We should begin by taking into account equipment that we've added or removed, physical changes to the facility, changes in our personnel, differences in our product mix, and any other changes that have occurred in the last year. I would bet that when you take a comprehensive look at your safety plan, you will find that it's in need of updating in at least one of these areas. For instance, has there been a change in your chemical supplier? Do you need to update your MSDS catalog? What about your raw materials? Has there been a change in terms of the materials you're using? If so, have you looked into the possible hazards associated with these materials? In addition, many companies are moving toward "cell" configurations; have you considered the safety implications? When was the last time your first-aid supplies were checked?

All of these are fairly small items, and there are many more things that I have not mentioned. But every aspect of your safety plan should be reviewed in detail, and this is the time to do it. Of course, your safety manual should also be updated at the beginning of each year. We should make sure that all of our employees have a copy of the manual, and also that they have read it. This is also a perfect time to update the signage in your plant. It is amazing how dated these signs can become. Another important document that should now be reviewed is the required OSHA injury report.


**“MANY OF US—MYSELF INCLUDED—HAVE EXPERIENCED SOME DEGREE OF HEARING LOSS OVER THE YEARS DUE TO THE ENVIRONMENT THAT WE WORK IN. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS EMPLOYERS TO REDUCE THIS HAZARD BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY. THIS CAN MEAN FURNISHING EAR PLUGS, OR EVEN BUILDING WALLS TO CONTAIN THE SOURCES OF NOISE IN OUR SHOPS.”**

Has it been kept up to date? Is it immediately available in case you are audited?

I realize that this list can appear intimidating at first glance, but if you can just take the items one at a time, it is a very doable goal. Of course, this assumes that you have a safety plan in place, as well as a comprehensive safety manual. If you have not yet gotten around to this project, put it

on your “to-do” list—or better yet, make it your New Year's resolution. You will be glad that you did.

One of the articles in this month's issue addresses noise analysis. In this industry we all realize the importance of quiet-running gear sets, but do we take time to consider the implications of the noise created in our busy shops? Many of us—myself included—have experienced some degree of hearing loss over the years due to the environment that we work in. It is our responsibility as employers to reduce this hazard by any means necessary. This can mean furnishing ear plugs to all of our employees, or even building walls to contain the sources of noise in our shops. One source that can be controlled is the use of radios. It seems that no one can work without a radio playing these days, and due to the usual noise in a shop, the radio is normally turned up loud enough to be heard over the machines. I find this to be a hazard, because any good machine operator will agree that he can tell by the sound of the machine if there is a problem, and with the extra noise of the radios, the operator can't hear the machine. And while I realize that my next statement will not be popular, I suggest that we control the use of radios in our shops so that they do not contribute to the existing hazards.

This being the first month of the year, I would like to invite all of our readers to contribute to the usefulness of this column. If you have any subjects that you would like to see covered, please feel free to contact me through the magazine, or directly at the phone number or e-mail address found below. 

### 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)].