

Local junior colleges may represent a valuable resource when it comes to obtaining safety training for your employees, along with a wealth of additional educational opportunities related to the workplace.

Well, IMTS 2006 is now behind us. I sincerely hope that you all had a good experience at the show, and I really hope that you took the time to review the safety aspects of the equipment that interested you. If you did, I hope that you were impressed with the care and concern that machinery manufacturers put into their equipment when it comes to the safe operation and maintenance of the latest models. I would really like to hear any stories you may have—good or bad—about your experiences with discussing safety at the show. You can send e-mail to me at the address listed in the box found at the end of this column.


This month's issue delves into powder-metal gears. Are there safety factors to be concerned about? Of course there is the obvious question of "will a powder-metal gear stand up to the intended use?" But what about your employees? Are there things that we, as employers, should be concerned about? One thing that comes to mind is the required finishing operations. The composition of many powder metals is such that a lot more dust or metal particles can be created during cutting and finishing operations when using this material. We must provide a means of keeping a clean working environment, which may require extra dust collectors or better ventilation. It is a factor to consider when getting into working with this material.

Another topic spotlighted this month is

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deburring. We have discussed some of the hazards of deburring in previous columns, and it probably bears repeating. The big safety concern that I have with deburring is the fact that the parts have to be handled prior to the deburring process, and the burrs are a hazard. Some of the newest deburring machines that are CNC controlled and have automatic loading are inherently safer than the older equipment. A great many of us, however, are small jobshops and can't justify the expense of this newer equipment, so we still depend upon our employees to process the parts manually. Many accidents occur during

this process, however it is accomplished. An inexpensive alternative is to provide proper protective gear and training on the safest way to complete the process. Unfortunately this often falls through the cracks, and we assume that something as simple as deburring doesn't really require our attention. This is a mistake. We need to keep our employees safe, so we need to spend whatever time is necessary to properly instruct them.

On a different subject, I have been emphasizing safety training from the very beginning of my writing these columns. I recently received a catalog from a local junior college that offers many manufacturing courses or seminars including classes on safety and workplace security, as well as occupational health and environmental services. This strikes me as being an unexplored resource for the proper training of not only our safety instructors, but for any or all of our employees who need additional training. The fees for junior colleges are really quite reasonable when compared to professional trainers, and the requirements basically allow anyone to attend. I would highly suggest that you explore the classes provided by your local junior college to see what they may have to offer you. I think you will be pleasantly surprised, because they offer a large variety of things—in addition to the safety courses—that you will find helpful in your quest for properly trained and knowledgeable employees. 

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