



# SITESAFETY

terryMcDONALD

Member of the ANSI Subcommittee on Gear Safety

While OEM representatives are always available to answer safety-related questions about their equipment, take advantage to ask them in person at IMTS this month!

**BUBBLE GUM AND BALING WIRE...** shop rags and duct tape... do these items ring a bell? Many of us in the gear-cutting industry are still using machines that have been in service for many years. Over that period of time we have often had to make do on repairs to this equipment with whatever we had on hand. How many of us have used a coat hanger to hold something in place until we can get the proper part, or perhaps we've used duct tape to hold a broken casting together until we can get it fixed. My point is this: I'll bet that if you look closely at your shop you will find machines or workstations that have these "make-do" fixes in place, and chances are they've probably been there for extended periods of time in some cases. "They still work, so we can't be bothered to spend the time or money to fix them properly" seems to be the prevailing view.

Needless to say, this is an incredibly counterproductive situation from a safety point of view. Any time a make-do repair is left in place—whether it has been made to a machine, a tool, or to any other piece of equipment in our shops that can cause an injury of any kind—we are not just endangering our employees, we are also liable for actually creating a hazard by not doing things properly. We all want to do our best to ensure the safety and well being of our employees, but the old adage "out of sight, out of mind" often prevails when a makeshift repair seems to be working. A large part of my job involves repairing these older gear-cutting machines, and I am often amazed by the makeshift repairs I encounter that have been made and then left as seemingly permanent. The materials used are often of a much lower caliber than the original, and so they present very real hazards to the personnel operating the equipment. I have even seen steel bars used in place of fuses, which obviously gives no protection to the machine, operator, or maintenance personnel.

I have a suggestion to make. I think it would behoove all of us to inspect our shop with special attention paid to spotting these potential hazards in particular. This applies to everything in the shop, not just machines. Maybe there are extension cords being used where they could trip an unknowing passerby, makeshift covers on parts, or chip bins that could fail in some manner. If you look around with a fresh eye, I'd be willing to bet that each and every one of us is subject to some hazards of our own making, and more often than not they would require very little time, money, or effort to resolve. You will find this exercise to be well worth your attention, and everyone at your workplace will benefit.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Terry McDonald is partner and manager of Repair Parts, Inc., and a member and past-chairman of the ANSI B11.11 Subcommittee on Safety Requirements for Construction, Care, and Use of Gear Cutting Equipment. Contact him at (815) 968-4499, [rpi@repair-parts-inc.com](mailto:rpi@repair-parts-inc.com), or [[www.repair-parts-inc.com](http://www.repair-parts-inc.com)].

As you know, the International Manufacturing Technology Show (IMTS) will be held September 13-18 at McCormick Place in Chicago, and I hope that you will all have the opportunity to attend. This is the ideal time and place to get fresh ideas on the latest and greatest methods of manufacture. It is also the ideal time to pursue a greater understanding of safety. Not only will company representatives be showing and promoting the safety features of the new equipment they've developed, but will be many vendors that specialize in safety equipment of all types. These vendors can be a valuable source of information if you approach them for answers to your questions. I also believe

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that IMTS is the perfect place to network with your fellow safety coordinators, and I encourage you to do so. Remember that not everyone is as safety minded as you may be, but that everyone attending IMTS has an interest in the safety-related aspects of their job. I have noticed that at the last few shows machine manufacturers have been placing more of an emphasis on the safety features of their machines. This is a really good thing, of course, but remember that their main goal is to sell you equipment. It is up to you to make sure that the equipment they are promoting—and that you may be thinking of purchasing—will be safe in your shop. Everyone has a slightly different set of circumstances, after all, and what may be a good safety feature in one environment may actually be a hazard in another. So make sure that you ask all the safety-related questions that pertain to your particular operation while you have the opportunity in Chicago. 