

# A FLOOD OF LESSONS

**About the time we were in the midst of planning the editorial content for this issue of *Gear Technology*, we, like everyone else in the metro area, found ourselves diverted by the Great Chicago Flood. For a week, it seemed to be all we thought about. Then the tunnels dried out, the stores reopened, and we all went back to work.**

But some of the lessons from this crash course in urban engineering have remained. And, as I've looked over the line-up for this issue, it occurs to me that some of the lessons learned from this soggy disaster can be applied a lot of places - including the American gear industry. And, coincidentally, some of our coverage for this issue reflects these issues.

"Infrastructure" was a word we all learned during Flood Week. Suddenly, live at five, was a vivid demonstration of the importance of all the non-glamorous basics that make a great city run. The lesson was clear: Neglect the basics, and sooner or later, you will have to pay the price.

Some in the American gear industry have been neglecting their infrastructure the same way cities all over the country have been, and it's starting to show. In David Goodfellow's "Viewpoint" in this issue, he points out that the U.S. gear industry has the oldest inventory of machine tools in the industrial world.

It's IMTS time in Chicago again, and some of the most up-to-date, efficient machinery in the world will be on display. This is a great opportunity to go looking at new equipment. And if you haven't thought about upgrading, it's certainly at least time to do that much. The exhibitors at IMTS are anxious for your business; they need the sales today, and they need healthy customers tomorrow. Competitive machinery is essential to our success, and we can't "wait a while" to become competitive.

Some would say that the American gear industry is already a leaking tunnel; and we've all seen what happens when the necessary repairs are put off too long.

Another lesson learned from the Great Chicago Flood was about the importance of planning. One of the phenomena of that strange week in this city's history that didn't attract a lot of attention around the country was the nearly flawless evacuation of close to a million people

from the Loop area in a matter of six hours.

How did that brilliant bit of logistics happen in the midst of what seemed to be a comedy of errors? Because some unnamed souls in the appropriate departments planned ahead. They asked themselves, what would we do if...? and then drew up a plan accordingly. They thought about the details and were prepared.

Our "Management Matters" column in this issue and the next deal with planning a successful trade show, which, at least in terms of the details involved, is not unlike planning the evacuation of a major city. There's a lot to do, a lot that can go wrong, a lot to think of, but if you succeed, you're a hero.

Sure planning is hard work. Sometimes it's a bit boring. It involves the little details that can make you crazy. But it's the kind of careful, plodding, non-glamorous work that makes any project or any business succeed.

The gear industry is no different from any other: to succeed we need to think about the future, plan for it, invest in it. Otherwise we'll find ourselves up to our collective basements in far more than dirty water.

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