

HEALTH, SAFETY, & ENVIRONMENTAL



SAFETY ALERT

**Alert #: SA 64-26** **Date: October 5, 2026**

## Modifying Safety Equipment is Never an Option

During a customer equipment inspection, a damaged fan guard was discovered on an air prep unit. The guard had reportedly been modified by a third-party contractor, not GIS, after the fan began contacting the guard due to damage and distortion of the guard assembly. Rather than removing the equipment from service and repairing or replacing the damaged guard, portions of the guard were cut away to create clearance between the rotating fan and the guard. This modification altered the manufacturer's designed protection and increased the potential for personnel to contact moving equipment. No injury occurred; however, the modification compromised an engineered safety device intended to protect personnel from rotating equipment hazards.







**Why Is This Important?**

Machine guards are engineered safety controls designed to prevent contact with moving, rotating, pinch points, and entanglement hazards. When guards are modified, removed, bypassed, or defeated:

- Personnel may be exposed to moving equipment.
- Hands, fingers, clothing, gloves, and tools can enter hazardous areas.
- Equipment can fail unexpectedly, creating additional struck-by hazards.
- The manufacturer's intended level of protection is compromised.
- Regulatory and company requirements may be violated.

A damaged guard is a safety concern. When guarding integrity has been compromised, the equipment must be removed from service until the guard can be properly repaired or replaced. Modifying a guard to keep equipment running is never an acceptable repair regardless of production needs, noise concerns, equipment availability, or schedule pressures.

**Potential Consequences:**

- Amputation injuries
- Entanglement incidents
- Equipment damage and unplanned downtime
- Lacerations and fractures
- Struck-by injuries from damaged rotating components

**Key Learning Points:**

- Safety devices and guards must be maintained in their original manufacturer-designed condition and function.
- If a guard becomes damaged or no longer performs its intended function, the equipment should be removed from service until appropriate repairs can be completed.
- Temporary fixes that alter the design, dimensions, or effectiveness of a guard are not acceptable.
- Personnel must not modify, bypass, defeat, remove, or disable any safety-related device without appropriate engineering approval and manufacturer guidance.
- Any damaged or deficient safety guard should be reported immediately to supervision and documented for corrective action.

**Remember**

**When safety equipment is damaged, repair or replace it. Never modify it.**

Engineered safety controls are installed to protect people from serious injury. If a guard is damaged enough to interfere with equipment operation, the correct response is to stop using the equipment, remove it from service, and ensure it is properly repaired or replaced before returning it to operation.

**Protective devices that have been modified may appear functional, but they no longer provide the level of protection they were designed to deliver.**

Proper use of the ***GIS LIFE Processes*** can help to create a ***FAIL-SAFE*** Work Environment

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