

Be Aware of Lockout / Tagout

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Overview

OSHA statistics show that six percent of all deaths in the workplace result from the unexpected activation of a machine or other piece of equipment during maintenance or other servicing. In addition, more than 25,000 work days are lost each year because of injuries in similar situations.

OSHA's Lockout/Tagout regulation, 29 CFR 1910.147, requires employers to develop procedures for isolating energy sources when servicing or maintaining their equipment and machinery. The purpose of the standard is to prevent injuries from the unexpected release of energy.

Understanding Lockout/Tagout

Lockout/tagout is a warning and prevention system for unexpected start-up and release of stored energy.

Two terms which directly relate to this system are:

- Lockout - The placement of a device that blocks the flow of energy from a power source to a piece of equipment.
- Tagout - The process of attaching a tag to a disconnect switch or other energy isolating device to warn others not to restore energy to the tagged equipment.

When performing lockout/tagout on equipment and machines, the operators and the people working in the area need to be informed that lockout/tagout is being applied and servicing is being done on the equipment and machines.

When locking out the energy source is impossible, tagging the equipment may be the best procedure you can do.

Who is involved?

Lockout/tagout involves three types of employees with different levels of responsibility - authorized, affected, and other.

- Authorized - Employees who perform the servicing, maintenance, and set-up of equipment or machinery and apply the locks and tags to this equipment.
- Affected - Employees who operate or use the equipment or machines which are locked/tagged out when serviced, maintained, or set-up.
- Other - Employees whose work operations are or may be in an area where energy control procedures may be utilized (they are neither affected nor authorized employees).

Lockout/Tagout Procedures

Each piece of equipment or machine needs its own lockout/tagout procedure. The procedure must include:

- Preparing for shutdown.
- Shutting down the machine or equipment.
- Isolating the machine or equipment from the energy source.
- Applying the lockout/tagout device to the energy-isolating equipment.
- Verifying the isolation of the machines or equipment prior to starting work.
- Releasing all potentially hazardous stored or residual energy.

The procedure should include the steps for placement, removal, and transfer of lockout/tagout devices.

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