

Topic: Lock Out Tag Out

Do You Understand Your Company's Lockout/Tag Out Program?

What would you do if there was a jam in the machine you were operating? Let's say something small got caught in a roller and it was within sight and easy to reach. Would you reach in and remove the object? Many people have risked life and limb to do just that—and they lost.

Example

At a wood chip mill, a worker shut down, but did not lock out, a lumber stacker to clear a jammed board. His co-workers did not know he was clearing a jam and another worker restarted the machine. The stacker closed down on the first worker's hands, crushing his finger.

In a meat processing plant, a worker was cleaning the equipment. The machine was turned off, but it was not locked out and not de-energized. While he was cleaning the machine, he accidentally pressed the emergency stop button, which caused the machine to briefly run in reverse, slicing the worker's hand.

A 48-year-old male machine operator was attempting to adjust a plastic injection molding machine, even though it was company policy for machine operators to contact the shift supervisor when a repair was needed. The operator was crushed to death inside the machine.

The components of a lockout/tag out program

Most machines in a workplace have safeguarding devices built in, which are designed to protect workers during normal operations. But sometimes these safeguards need to be bypassed in order to perform maintenance or repairs. When these safety devices are removed, the hazardous energy that powers the equipment must be controlled. One way to control this energy is known as Lockout/Tag out, which is performed by trained and authorized personnel.

There are standards outlining the specific steps required in lockout/tag out and these steps can be customized to suit the needs of a workplace and its equipment. Even if you are not the person authorized to perform lockout/tag out in your organization, it is important that you understand the program used.

Generally, the steps include:

- Notifying all affected workers that a lockout is required and why;
- Shutting the equipment down and isolating all energy sources from the equipment;
- Releasing all stored energy from the equipment;
- Locking out and tagging the energy-isolating device;
- Verifying that all energy sources have been disconnected;
- Performing maintenance or repairs;

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- Removing the lockout/tag out device; and
- Notifying all affected workers that the activity is complete and work can resume.

Within these steps are other safety precautions that are taken by a trained and competent person. And none of these steps should be bypassed. If the equipment you are working on has been locked out and tagged for maintenance, wait until you have been notified that it is safe to resume work. The safety of your co-worker depends on it.

Conclusion

It's important that you understand how your organization's lockout/tag out program, your role in it and your responsibilities. If you are unsure about any aspect of the lockout/tag out program, speak with your supervisor.

Quiz:

1. After shutting down a machine and isolating all energy sources from it, the machine is ready for maintenance.
True or False
2. It is not necessary to tag out a machine if you are only turning it off momentarily to quickly clear a jam.
True or False
3. Who must be notified before maintenance begins on a machine?
4. After the maintenance has been performed, what steps need to be taken before work can be resumed?
5. Lockout/tag out can be performed by any worker.
True or False

Answers:

1 False. Stored energy must also be released, 2 False, 3 All affected workers, 4 The lockout/tag out device must be removed and affected workers must be notified that work can resume, 5 False. Lockout/tag out must be performed only by those trained and authorized to do so.