

WHEN IN DOUBT – LOCK IT OUT

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In 1990 OSHA implemented the Control of Hazardous Energy Standard, commonly known as the Lockout/Tagout Standard. It requires employers to:

- Develop a written Lockout/Tagout Program
- Train employees in the elements of the program
- Develop individual written procedures for complicated pieces of equipment
- Provide the proper locks and tags that meet the standard
- Conduct annual audit of all Authorized Employees and document the results
- Monitor the program and enforce it as needed

Most companies have now implemented the program and have conducted the training, provided the locks and tags and developed the individual written lockout procedures.

Unfortunately there are still too many employees getting hurt or killed because of a failure to follow proper procedures. Last year:

- In Cincinnati an employee was killed as a result of being caught in a tire shredder.
- In central Ohio a mechanic for a feed processing company was caught in a feed blender and killed.

Several years ago:

- In Massillon an employee fell into a trash compactor while un-jamming the hopper and was crushed to death.
- In Medina a mechanic lost an arm in an auger when he was trying to repair it.
- In Columbus an employee was killed in a central batch mixer when the drum activated while he was in the mixer.

The sad thing about each of the above, not one of these had to happen if the employees had followed lockout/tagout procedures and locked out the equipment.

Employees need to understand that, **When In Doubt, Lock it Out**, before doing any servicing or maintenance where there is the possibility of equipment start-up or the release of an energy source. It is not good enough to simply turn off the equipment.

There are some exceptions to Lockout/Tagout such as in **Minor Tool Changes or Adjustments** that are integral to production, routine in nature, repetitive and there has been no history of an accident. Testing and positioning where power is required in order to do the job. This requires someone trained in this procedure.

OSHA, also, considers cord controlled equipment, locked out if the electric cord can be unplugged and is in the view of the Authorized Employee.

These exceptions should be clearly spelled out in your lockout/tagout program and communicated to your Authorized Employees. Locking out a piece of equipment should always be done where possible.

Don't allow employees to ever bi-pass the lockout requirements. It only takes a couple of minutes to lock and tagout a piece of equipment before work is to be done. Also, ensure employees Verify that the equipment is a Zero Energy state before they begin working on it.

Lockout and tagout must become a habit of each Authorized Employee 100% compliance with the company program is a must. Remember, failure to have an employee follow the proper procedures puts him/her at risk of serious injury or death, and your company at risk for an Intentional Torte Law Suit.

When In Doubt – Always Make Sure It is Locked Out!

If you need help with any part of your company safety program or need employee safety training, please give me a call at 1-800-356-1274.