Facility Safety

Lockout Tagout FAQ's

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Lockout/Tagout can be a difficult concept to grasp for new folks in the industry. Get all your questions answered with a ***Quick Reference FAQ guide***.

Download a printable copy of the Quick Reference FAQ's document *here.*

BACKGROUND

What is "lockout/tagout"?

"Lockout/tagout" refers to specific practices and procedures to safeguard employees from the unexpected energization or startup of machinery and equipment, or the release of hazardous energy during service or maintenance activities. This requires, in part, that a designated individual turns off and disconnects the machinery or equipment from its energy source(s) before performing service or maintenance. Additionally, the authorized employee(s) either lock or tag the energy-isolating device(s) to prevent the release of hazardous energy and take steps to verify that the energy has been isolated effectively. If the potential exists for the release of hazardous stored energy or for the re-accumulation of stored energy to a hazardous level, the employer must ensure that the employee(s) take steps to prevent injury that may result from the release of the stored energy.

Lockout devices hold energy-isolation devices in a safe or "off" position. They provide protection by preventing machines or equipment from becoming energized because they are positive restraints that no one can remove without a key or other unlocking mechanism, or through extraordinary means, such as bolt cutters. Tagout devices, by contrast, are prominent warning devices that an authorized employee fastens to energy-isolating devices to warn employees not to re-energize the machine while he or she services or maintains it. Tagout devices are easier to remove and, by themselves, provide employees with less protection than do lockout devices.

Why do I need to be concerned about lockout/tagout?

Employees can be seriously or fatally injured if machinery they service or maintain unexpectedly energizes, starts up, or releases stored energy. OSHA's standard on the Control of Hazardous Energy (Lockout/Tagout), found in Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1910.147, spells out the steps employers must take to prevent accidents associated with hazardous energy. The standard

addresses practices and procedures necessary to disable machinery and prevent the release of potentially hazardous energy while maintenance or servicing activities are performed.

Two other OSHA standards also contain energy control provisions: 29 CFR 1910.269 and 1910.333. In addition, some standards relating to specific types of machinery contain de-energization requirements—such as 29 CFR 1910.179(l)(2)(i)(c) (requiring the switches to be "open and locked in the open position" before performing preventive maintenance on overhead and gantry cranes). The provisions of Part 1910.147 apply in conjunction with these machine-specific standards to assure that employees will be adequately protected against hazardous energy.

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