

Lockout for Safety

Have you ever been working in the basement when someone upstairs turned off the lights? You're in total darkness and you let out a yell. This usually brings the lights back on. No harm is done. But what if you were checking a machine and the power was turned on, and the gears started turning on your arm?

This type of accident happens all too frequently. Before working on a machine you must lockout the main switch and tag it each time.

There are several reasons why a machine may run after it has been shut off: cycling due to gravity, a switch bypassed by an electrical wire, air or hydraulic lines that have not been bled, and locking and tagging out the main electrical switch.

The basic sequence for a lockout procedure is:

Disconnect and tag the main control of the entire unit to be worked on. Use padlocks to lockout if possible. (Each person working on the equipment should have their own lock and key). Disconnect all plugs and cords on portable units. Attach your tag, record the starting time, department, and reason for repair. Bleed air and hydraulic lines; block all rams, and lockout main valves. Test the machine to make sure it will not cycle. Then perform the necessary adjustment or repair. After repairs or adjustments are completed, replace all guards and safety devices. Remove only your own padlock and tag. When all is clear, restore power and check-run the equipment.

Remember that the tag and lockout devices should be removed only by the person who originally attached them. The supervisor, after checking the situation thoroughly, may remove these devices in case of illness or absence of the person(s) who attached them.

Many people don't want to take time to go through safe lockout procedures. Those hurrying and taking shortcuts will sooner or later be involved in a lockout accident.

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