

SAFETY ZONE

Lockout/Tagout provides hazardous energy protection

Mechanic crushed in escalator

A 37-year-old escalator mechanic died when he was crushed performing maintenance inside the mechanism of an escalator. A co-worker dropped the escalator's electrical circuit box, sending power to the escalator, which began moving. No locks or tags had been placed on the power controls to the escalator. The disconnect switch at the circuit panel that fed power to the escalator had not been locked and tagged out, and no blocks or mechanical devices had been used to keep the escalator from moving.

Source: Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) program/NIOSH

To prevent injuries related to lockout-tagout, you need an effective hazardous energy control program. The following are some basic procedures that every lockout-tagout program must include:

Take the extra time needed to de-energize, lockout, and tagout equipment. No matter how much you are tempted, or how much previous

experience you have had with the machine, don't work on machinery without taking the time to set up proper safeguards.

Disconnect the power source. It generally takes more than just turning a switch off to be safe. The switch may be defective or the power may find its way through a short circuit or other source. For example, before performing maintenance on a lawn mower, detach the spark plug wire so that the engine cannot start accidentally.

Lockout and tagout control switches in an "off" or "safe" position. Make sure others know not to restart the machine. Workers frequently cause death or injury to co-workers by restarting or energizing a machine when they don't realize someone is working on it.

Release or block stored energy. All forms of stored energy must be completely released or blocked to be safe. For example, release spring tension or block spring-driven parts; drain or bleed hydraulic lines, hot pipes, or pressurized tanks; block or brace gravity-driven moving parts or heavy overhead objects.

Test operation controls. Put controls in the "on" position to make sure a machine does not start up. Then return operation controls to the "off" position.

When work is completed, remove tools and other items, reinstall machine guards, make sure other workers are at a safe distance, remove locks and tags, turn on energy, and test to make sure the machine is working properly.

Safety Quiz

When can a simple padlock and laminated piece of striped cardboard save your life?

ANSWER:

A simple padlock and laminated piece of striped cardboard can save your life when used as part of a well-planned lockout-tagout program.