SAFETY SHARE COURTESY OF: Jim Warren - TXAPA

When it’s time for maintenance or repair, all you must do is flip the switch, right?

Well, no. OSHA requires a formal lockout/tagout program to ensure equipment is safe to work on. Injury records show some 50,000 workers are injured annually in unintentional equipment startup accidents, with 120 fatalities. Even with the law in place, LOTO is one of OSHA’s most violated standards. It’s also among the most expensive of violations. Every company must identify all equipment and procedures for proper de-energizing equipment, be it electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, or some combination. Be specifically cautious as some equipment maybe still energized even though it is turned off.

Here are the top 10 steps to properly lockout/tagout equipment:

1. Notify all affected employees that a lockout is required and let them know the reason.

2. If the equipment is operating, shut it down by the normal stopping procedure (i.e. depress stop button, open toggle switch, etc.).

3. Operate the switch, valve, or other energy isolating devices so that the energy source(s) (electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, etc.) is disconnected or isolated from the equipment.

4. Lockout energy isolating devices with an assigned individual lock.

5. Stored energy, such as that in capacitors, springs, elevated machine members, rotating fly wheels, hydraulic systems, and air, gas, steam, or water pressure, must also be dissipated or relieved by methods such as grounding, repositioning, blocking, or bleeding down.

6. After ensuring that no personnel are exposed and as a check on having disconnected the energy sources, operate the push button or other normal operating controls to make certain the equipment will not operate. CAUTION: Return operating controls to neutral position after the test.

7. The equipment is now locked out.

8. When the job is complete and equipment is ready for testing or normal service, check the equipment area to see that no one is exposed.

9. When equipment is clear, remove all locks.

10. The energy isolating devices may be operated to restore energy to equipment.

References:

1. https://www.esfi.org/resource/lockout-tagout-your-life-depends-on-it-544
2. https://safetymanagementgroup.com/eight-steps-for-safer-lockouttagout-programs/