OSHA - Lockout Tagout Standard - Communication is Key to Safety

OSHA’s Lockout/Tagout Standard – Communication Is Key to Safety

It’s often said that effective communication is the key to safety. In fact, it is so important that OSHA’s Lockout/Tagout standard contains several requirements for Authorized Employees (those who apply Lockout/Tagout devices to equipment and machinery) to communicate with Affected Employees (those who operate equipment the equipment or machine that is being locked or tagged out). Here is an overview of some of those requirements:

Being able to identify who applied locks and tags to energy isolation devices allows Affected Employees to know who to contact if they have a question or concern about their machinery or equipment. Therefore, OSHA requires that all locks, tags, and other protective hardware used in the workplace to clearly identify the Authorized Employee who applied these devices. This can be achieved by placing the Authorized Employee’s name on their locks and tags, as well as by other methods such as utilizing a written log with assigned serial numbers of locks used by Authorized Employees. (Briefly discuss the methods used to identify lockout devices used at your location).

Authorized Employees must notify all Affected Employees that they will be applying their lock or tag to those employees’ equipment or machinery before starting work covered under the Lockout/Tagout standard. This will help assure the Affected Employees do not tamper with locks and tags or try to reactivate their equipment as it is being serviced or repaired. This should also put the Affected Employees on notice that they are to remain clear of their equipment or machine while it is being serviced or repaired.

Authorized Employees must also notify all Affected Employees before they remove their lock or tag and reactivating the equipment or machinery. This lets the Affected Workers know they must stay clear of the equipment as it is restarted by the Authorized Employee, so they do not get injured. The Authorized Worker must also let them know when they are free to resume using their equipment or machinery for normal operations.

By following these simple steps, we are always able to identify the Authorized Employee who applied a lock or tag to our equipment or machine. Following these steps can also lessen the chance of miscommunication between Authorized and Affected Employees. This is extremely important because as we said earlier, effective communication is the key to a safer workplace.

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