

Toolbox Talk: OSHA's Lockout/Tagout Standards – Why They Affect Everyone

[Reference 1910.147]

OSHA published their “control of hazardous energy” standard, also known as “Lockout/Tagout”, way back in 1989. This new standard required employers to develop and implement a program that effectively identified all hazardous energy sources so they could be isolated or controlled when one or more employees were performing maintenance or service on equipment or machinery which could be unknowingly started or release stored energy.

In spite of this comprehensive OSHA standard, many workers throughout the USA continue to suffer needless injuries, and some even die, because someone purposely takes a shortcut or accidentally commits an unsafe act without fully understanding the potential ramifications.

That is why OSHA requires that ALL workers be informed of their responsibilities when it comes to implementing an effective Lockout/Tagout program. To simplify this task, OSHA has identified three separate classes of employees in their Lockout/Tagout standard. They are:

- Authorized Employees – A person who performs servicing or maintenance on a machine or equipment under the protection of a Lockout/Tagout program;
- Affected Employees – An employee whose job requires him/her to operate or use a machine or equipment on which servicing or maintenance is being performed by an Authorized employee under Lockout/Tagout, or whose job requires him/her to work in an area in which such servicing or maintenance is being performed;
- Other Employees – An employee who may be in an area where Lockout/Tagout procedures might be utilized by others.

Obviously, the key to us having an effective Lockout/Tagout program that protects everyone is for ALL of us to understand what roles we play, and when those roles could change. That is why we will review in our upcoming toolbox talks how each class of employee has different responsibilities under the Lockout/Tagout program. But just as importantly, we will see how an employee could fall into more than one of these groups, and how our personal responsibilities could change, depending on where we are in the workplace and the work that is being performed nearby.

Does anybody have a question or comment about why it is so important for all of us to know our roles and responsibilities under OSHA's Lockout/Tagout standard? Please be sure to sign your name to the training certification form so you get credit for attending this training session.

