

Protect yourself from accidents

Has someone turned off the lights in the garage while you were still in there working? You yell, “Hey! I’m in here!” and hope the lights go back on. Nothing hazardous happened. Now imagine this same kind of situation involving a machine rather than a garage.

You stop the machine and place it on standby because you need to check something out or quickly retrieve a dropped tool. As you are bent over the idling machine, someone comes by and turns it back on again. Now the machine gears close on your arm.

This kind of accident happens more often than you realize. All you need to do to avoid this situation is lockout the main switch, tag it and then you’re on your way.

There are many reasons why machinery can continue to run after it has been turned off:

- Gravity can cause a cycle to continue
- A switch may have been circumvented by an electronic wire
- Air or hydraulic lines may not have had the pressure released
- The main switch may not have been locked out and properly tagged

Follow the proper procedure any time you need to perform maintenance on your machine.



Never remove the padlock and maintenance tag of another person. Only the supervisor may take the padlock and tag off if the original person is unavailable due to sickness or other absence, and only after the circumstances have been thoroughly investigated.

Don’t get in a hurry and circumvent lockout procedures. Workers who take short cuts because they are in a hurry will inevitably be involved in a lockout mishap.

Proper Lockout/Tagout Procedures

1. Disengage and tag the unit’s main control.
2. Use a padlock for the lockout if at all possible. Every person who works on the machine should have his or her own lock and key.
3. Unplug all electrical plugs and cords if the unit is portable.
4. Fasten the tag on the machine. Make sure the tag includes following information:
 - start time
 - department
 - reason for the maintenance
5. Release pressure on the hydraulic and air lines, obstruct all rams and make sure the main valves are locked out.
6. Confirm the machinery will not cycle.
7. Complete the required maintenance or repair.
8. Return any guards or safety devices that were removed back to their original location.
9. Unlock and remove only your padlock and maintenance tag.
10. Once everything is clear, turn the power back on and accomplish a test of the machinery.

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