Lockout/Tagout/Tryout Off-the-Job

The practice of using a lock and tag to isolate power from a piece of manufacturing equipment is not uncommon at work, but you may not realize that more injuries from failure of locking out happen at home and they can be prevented.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG

Ray works as a punch press maintenance supervisor. One day at home, Ray's wife cooked a wonderful dinner. In return, Ray offered to do the dishes while she went to the gym. While rinsing the dishes in the sink, a spoon slid into the garbage disposal and without giving it a second thought, Ray leaned over the sink and reached into the disposal. While reaching for the spoon, Ray's leg brushed against the on/off switch and turned on the disposal. In an instant, Ray was seriously injured.

If Ray had unplugged the disposal and tried the on-off switch before reaching into the disposal, the injury could have been avoided. A few seconds of caution would have prevented this injury.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Ray’s story is just one example of where lockout/tagout/tryout could be used at home. The following are a few more suggestions:

- When working on the lawn mower, weed-eater, edger or other gasoline-powered equipment, be sure to shut off the gasoline flow and disconnect or even remove the spark plug before starting the work.
- When working with power tools such as circular saws and hand drills, be sure to disconnect the power source and ensure that no one else can plug it back in.
- If you are unclogging your vacuum cleaner, disconnect the power cord before beginning the work.
- When working or cleaning kitchen appliances such as a mixer, blender, coffee maker or electric knife, make sure that the power is disconnected. Remember, unless you are qualified, never attempt to repair damaged household appliances.
- When you turn off a breaker to do maintenance on household appliances, make sure it is the right one. It won’t help much if you turn off the power to your hot water tank when you are working on your electric range!

Even if you work in an office without formal lockout procedures, it is still important to understand that you must isolate equipment from all power sources before attempting to make repairs or adjustments. This equipment includes everything from computers to paper shredders, from postage meters to power drills.

FINAL WORD

On average, more people are injured off of the job that could have been prevented with a lockout/tagout/tryout process. You can apply the principles of lockout/tagout/tryout to many situations at home and avoid the possibility of injury.