OSHA: Lock and Tag Overview

Key Takeaways:
– Recognize the purpose of lock and tag procedures
– Match roles and responsibilities for worker designations under lock and tag
– Identify sources of energy hazards and consequences of improper control
– Recognize different types of lock and tag devices
– Recognize criteria and situations that qualify as exceptions to lock and tag requirements.

Course Description
For your protection from the serious hazards posed by the unexpected start-up or operation of equipment during repair or maintenance, OSHA has established a Control of Hazardous Energy standard. Commonly referred to as lockout/tagout (LOTO), or energy isolation standard, this standard requires the application of markings and barriers that prevent unauthorized persons from energizing and operating equipment.

In any form, energy becomes hazardous when it builds to a certain level, or is released inadvertently or unexpectedly. The phrase, lockout/tagout, refers to specific practices and procedures that safeguard employees from the unexpected startup of machinery and equipment, or the release of hazardous energy, during service or maintenance activities.

Locks and Tags Purpose
Lock and tag procedures establish safe boundaries to protect workers, in addition to ensuring that a machine has been isolated or disconnected from its power source. Individually, locks and tags serve different purposes and must be used accordingly.

Tags alone cannot sufficiently prevent an individual from starting a piece of equipment while another individual is servicing it. Due to this fact, tags must only act as temporary warnings until the hazardous equipment can be properly locked.

Every tag needs to be securely attached, legible and understandable. As well, tags must be made of materials capable of withstanding the environmental conditions they may encounter, such as rain or snow, and they must bear the name of the authorized person placing the tag on the equipment. Whenever possible, fasten tags to the same point as the lock. If that is not possible, then the tag must be near the lock and immediately obvious.

Locks are barriers keeping equipment from starting up and causing harm to someone who may be working on that piece of machinery. In order to work, locks must hold the energy isolating devices in a “safe” or “off” position. Regularly, locks should be inspected to guarantee they are standardized and durable.

Every lock needs to be keyed differently so no more than one person’s key will open it. Whenever a combination lock is used, for everyone’s safety only the person placing the lock can know the combination to open it. There’s a reason for placing locks and tags on equipment, therefore they should never be ignored or removed by anyone other than the individual who placed them.

In the case that it is not possible to lock a de-energized energy source, only a tag may be used. Any tag without a lock should be treated as if it is a lock. Whoever placed the tag must be identified on it, typically through the person’s name and contact information.