

AT THE END OF THE WORKDAY, EVERYONE GOES HOME SAFE.

Winter Maintenance & Lockout Tagout (LOTO)

Toolbox Talk



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This time of year is one utilized by many companies to catch up on maintenance from the busy season. Often, this maintenance is routine and simple, and that is where the issue lies.

There is nothing wrong with routines or simple tasks. In fact, most people prefer to have a routine and to keep things simple. It makes day-to-day life easier and uncomplicated. However, when something is routine and simple, we tend to take it lightly and even leave steps out that can feel unnecessary, like lockout tagout (LOTO).

LOTO is, in its simplest form, removing all energy sources from a machine or situation to protect anyone working at the point of operation or near moving parts. It will also control situations where electricity is involved to eliminate shocks or electrocutions. It takes a lock to keep energy sources from being powered up, and a tag to let those in the area know maintenance is underway so no one tries to turn on power while someone is in a

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dangerous situation.

LOTO procedures are likely different for each company, as each has their own preference for how it is carried out, but all employees should be familiar with their company’s LOTO policy and have been trained in LOTO procedures for their respective roles. Regardless of your company’s specific procedures, there are likely several steps involved and it is important that all steps are followed each and every time, no matter how tedious they may seem.

There are many instances where LOTO procedures were not utilized, resulting in disaster. There are many more instances where LOTO procedures were not utilized, yet only near-misses occurred. Those near-misses are signals that what we are doing is not safe, we are putting our lives and the lives of our team at risk, and we need to be more mindful of safety. LOTO is a very simple way to save lives and should be an important part of your on-site maintenance routine.

Incident Profile:

To show the importance of following all LOTO procedures, let us look at an incident where a 42-year old male lost his life on a jobsite.

The victim was just finishing up repairing an auger that had broken while digging holes along a roadway for light poles. As he was finishing, the operator of the auger thought he received a thumbs-up from the victim and started rotating the auger to test it. The victim’s arm was caught in the auger, causing him to be twisted into the bit as his body was forced into the side of the machine.

Emergency services was contacted, but the extent of the injuries to the victim’s arm caused death before they could get him to the hospital.

Talking Points:

1. Why did this happen?
2. How could this have been prevented?
3. What is our company’s LOTO procedure?

