

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: OSHA's Lockout/Tagout Standard – Safety & On-site Contractors

[Reference 1910.147(f)(2)]

Consider this scenario . . .

“A maintenance employee of a manufacturing company locks out the compressed air pipe-line feeding into a pressure vessel that is going to be inspected by an on-site contractor later that day. The contractor shows up to perform the inspection and sees that the valve on the pipe-line has been locked out, so he applies his personal lock to the valve too. However, he assumed the host employer’s worker bled off all residual pressure inside the vessel; but in actuality the host employer’s worker had not bled off the pressure because he assumed the on-site contractor would do that. As the contractor removes the bolts holding the pressure vessel’s entry portal cover in place, the residual pressure present inside the vessel causes the cover to fly off and it strikes the unsuspecting worker.”

When contractors come on site to perform service or maintenance on our machinery or equipment, or conversely, if we have a person or crew go to work on another employer’s machinery or equipment, there exists a potential for accidents and injuries due to the chance that the two parties do not understand one another’s lockout /tagout procedures. This is especially true when employees of both employers are working on the same piece of equipment or machinery and a worker of one employer makes “assumptions” about the other employer’s lockout procedures.

To help alleviate the potential for accidents associated with miscommunication between two employers working at the same site, OSHA requires both employers to coordinate information about their respective lockout/tagout programs and procedures. This coordination can take place in the form of a face-to-face meeting to discuss the procedures, or through reviewing each other’s written lockout / tagout procedures to make sure all workers involved know the steps they need to take to avoid causing, or experiencing, an accident.

If you are ever performing work or overseeing activities that involves lockout / tagout in your work area, and there are workers from an on-site contractor or other employer involved, make sure your supervisor or safety representative is aware of the situation so we can sync up our lockout / tagout programs and procedures. Because failing to do so could result in an unintended, and unnecessary, accident.

Does anybody have a question or comment about these general requirements to be followed for coordinating lockout / tagout procedures when we work with or around other employers? Please be sure to sign your name to the training certification form so you get credit for attending this training session.