

## Lockout/tag-out protects workers from hazardous injuries, death

A sudden blast of steam, a jolt from an electrical short or a burst of stored mechanical energy can cause serious injuries and even death to machinery workers when lockout/tag-out safety procedures are not followed.

[Hazardous energy](#), as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) calls it, is the danger that lurks when workers are performing maintenance and service tasks on machinery or equipment.

According to OSHA, some 3 million craft workers, machine operators and laborers service equipment and face the greatest risk of hazardous energy. OSHA has a [standard for employers to follow](#). These procedures allow employers to create an energy control program tailored to the needs of a particular workplace or task, taking into account the machinery or equipment that is to be maintained or serviced.

Generally, appropriate lockout or tag-out devices must be applied to devices that isolate energy, thereby de-energizing machines or equipment. To comply with OSHA's standard, employers need to develop, implement and enforce an energy-control program. Optimally, durable, standardized and substantial lockout devices should be used on equipment that can be locked out.

If lockout is not available, tag-out devices can be used, as long as they provide equal protection to employees. These safety devices must identify individual users, and an energy control program should allow only the employee who applied a lockout/tag-out device to remove it.

Energy controls also apply to new or overhauled equipment that is capable of being locked out. If lockout devices are unavailable for machines or equipment, an effective tag-out program should be developed, implemented and enforced.

Documentation is a critical part of an effective lockout/tag-out program, as are annual inspections to ensure energy control devices are durable, standardized and substantial.

OSHA says employers need to ensure their workers know, understand and follow the steps in a lockout/tag-out program to control hazardous energy. Employee training should cover:

- Aspects of the energy control program
- Elements of the energy control procedure and how it relates to the worker's duties or assignment
- The various requirements of the OSHA standard related to lockout/tag-out

OSHA has developed an [interactive lockout/tag-out training program](#) that includes a tutorial, hot topics and case studies. [Control of Hazardous Energy, Lockout/Tagout](#) is a downloadable e-book from OSHA. SCF Arizona also offers a free work safety training card and poster on lockout/tag-out; visit [scfaz.com](http://scfaz.com) to order using our [Safety Material Order Form](#).