

Lockout/Tagout — Basic Rules for Locks

Failure to follow lockout/tagout rules on equipment is responsible for about 10% of all industrial accidents. Never forget that that these accidents almost always cause a severe life-changing injury or even death.

For equipment that has been properly de-energized, most accidents occur when someone fails to follow basic rules regarding locks. That can allow a person to turn power back on without following proper procedures and trigger an accident.

General rules for lockout/tagout locks include:

- Only authorized and trained people can service, repair, or maintain equipment. They should be the only ones to attach and remove locks.
- Never give your key to someone else and never accept a key to remove a lock. Specific rules cover special situations for authorized people.
- All devices must be provided by the employer. This includes locks, tags, and hardware which must be durable and standardized.
- Never use a personal lock.
- All locks must be identified for the purpose of lockout/tagout use and can't be used for other purposes like cabinets or lockers.
- Locks must require keys to be opened. Combination locks that don't require a key are not allowed.
- Lockout/tagout devices and tags must identify the specific person assigned to apply and remove them. This reduces confusion regarding who attached a lock.
- The shift may change before the work is finished. In that situation, the first authorized person can remove their lock and the next authorized person can then immediately attach their lock. The switch must be immediate with no time where a lock is not in place.
- For situations that require multiple locks, each authorized person who is involved in the work must attach and remove their own lock.
- A specific procedure must be followed if an authorized person goes home and leaves their lock attached. Steps include:
 1. Verification that the person is not on the property
 2. Attempt to contact the authorized employee
 3. Only the person's supervisor removes the lock
 4. A new lock is attached
 5. The person is notified that the lock was removed when they return to work