Are LOTO Procedures Always Followed At Your Workplace?



The good news: The electric panel explosion portrayed in this video is only a dramatization.

The bad news: LOTO procedural shortcuts are all too real and common. And so are the fatal and gruesome injuries they cause.

Although it's quite disturbing, this video is very effective in demonstrating how even the slightest LOTO shortcut can lead to disaster.

The Moral: The LOTO procedure must be followed to the letter 100% of the time.

LOTO HAZARDS & HOW TO PREVENT THEM : WHAT'S THE HAZARD?

You wouldn't perform repairs on an electrical panel if the juice was on. So you de-energize the panel before the work begins to avoid getting electrocuted or burned by arc flash.

It makes perfect sense, right?

But. . .

Bad Things Can Happen Once You Start the Work

- Somebody who doesn't know you're working on the panel may turn on the power;
- You might accidentally turn the power on yourself;
- It might turn out that the power really wasn't shut off after all; or
- There may still be residual power in the system that causes the panel to energize.

Were Any of These Things to Happen. . .



You'd probably get electrocuted or engulfed in an electrical explosion like the worker in the video.

WHAT OSHA SAYS

OSHA requires employers to implement a LOTO procedure to ensure these things don't happen. The LOTO procedure must list a method to:

- De-energize the equipment, i.e., turn it off; AND
- "Lock out" the energy source, i.e., use a lock or some other device to isolate it so nobody can turn it on while the work is being done.

The work can't begin until an "authorized employee," i.e., one who's trained and in charge of the lockout operation, verifies that both of these things have happened.

WHAT WENT WRONG IN THE VIDEO

The "authorized employee" in the video was Sean, the guy in the gray shirt. Maybe because he was distracted by his fiancée's call, he allowed the service worker to work on the panel without verifying that:

- The panel was de-energized—the power might have still been on because Gretchen had overridden his power down order; or
- The power source was properly locked out—somebody with a key to the room might have come in and turned on the power when the worker was fixing the panel.

And you saw what happened as a result.



LOCKOUT TAGOUT DO's & DON'Ts

- **DO** follow your workplace LOTO procedure
- **DON'T** ever take shortcuts in carrying out the procedure

- **DO** make sure all affected workers and contractor workers know what the LOTO procedure is
- **DON’T** repair or service machinery or equipment until and unless you know it’s been de-energized and the energy source has been locked out