SKILLSIGNAL™
Construction Safety & Compliance

TOOLBOX TALK

Communication Is the Lock: Three Times the Standard Makes You Open Your Mouth

TOPIC NO.	DURATION	AUDIENCE
LO-06	10 to 15 min	All Crew

OSHA REFERENCE 29 CFR 1910.147(c)(9) · 29 CFR 1910.147(c)(5)(ii)(D) · 29 CFR 1910.147(e)(2)

PROJECT / JOBSITE	DATE	PRESENTED BY

01 THE HOOK

START HERE

The lock on the disconnect protects the authorized employee from the machine. It does not protect him from the operator who comes back from break, finds his machine dead, and starts flipping breakers in the panel to find the one that "tripped." It does not protect him from the laborer who sees a lock with no name and figures it was left over from last week. The hardware does half the job. The other half is three sentences the standard requires the authorized employee to say out loud: I am locking this out. Here is who I am. I am about to turn it back on. Skip any of them and the lock is protecting a secret.

02 WHAT THE STANDARD REQUIRES YOU TO SAY

REQUIREMENT 1

TELL THEM BEFORE THE LOCK GOES ON

29 CFR 1910.147(c)(9): affected employees **shall be notified** by the employer or authorized employee of the application of lockout or tagout devices **before the controls are applied**. The operator, the helper, the crew in the area. Face to face, by radio, at the huddle. They need to know the machine is coming down, why, and that a lock on it is not a malfunction.

REQUIREMENT 2

PUT YOUR NAME ON IT

1910.147(c)(5)(ii)(D): every lock and tag **shall indicate the identity of the employee applying** it. The affected employee who needs the machine looks at the lock and knows exactly who to find. A nameless lock gets guessed about. A guess is how locks get cut.

REQUIREMENT 3

TELL THEM BEFORE THE LOCK COMES OFF

1910.147(c)(9) again, and **(e)(2)**: before restoring energy, affected employees are **notified that the devices have been removed** and the work area is checked so that **all employees are positioned safely** or removed. Nobody gets surprised by a machine that starts, and nobody is still inside it when it does.

REQUIREMENT 4

TELL THEM WHEN IT IS THEIRS AGAIN

Not in the standard's words, but in every good program: the authorized employee tells the operator the machine is restored and safe to run. Until then the operator does not assume. A disconnect with no lock and no word from the mechanic is a machine of unknown status.

03 WHO TALKS TO WHOM

AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEE SAYS	AFFECTED EMPLOYEE DOES
BEFORE SHUTDOWN **“I am locking out the mixer at the main disconnect to replace the drum seal. It will be down about two hours. My lock, my name on it.”**	BEFORE SHUTDOWN Stops using the machine. Stays clear. Does not try to restart it. Tells the rest of the crew who did not hear it.
DURING THE WORK “I am still on it.” Keeps the lock on through breaks. Keeps the tag legible. Answers the radio.	DURING THE WORK Sees a lock, reads the name, and if the machine is needed, finds that person. Never the breaker, never the valve.
BEFORE RESTART “I am removing my lock and restoring power to the mixer in two minutes. Everyone clear of the drum and the belt.” Walks the area first.	BEFORE RESTART Confirms clear. Confirms nobody is behind, under, or inside. Stays back until the word comes.
AFTER RESTART “Lock is off, guards are on, the mixer is yours.”	AFTER RESTART Resumes normal operation. Not before.

04 WHERE COMMUNICATION BREAKS

◆ **SHIFT CHANGE**
Day shift locks out, night shift arrives and finds a lock. 1910.147(f)(4) requires a handoff procedure. The outgoing authorized employee briefs the incoming one before the lock changes hands.

◆ **MULTIPLE TRADES**
The electrician locked out the panel. The pipefitter did not know. Everyone working on or near the machine is an affected employee and gets told.

◆ **THE LOCK WITH NO NAME**
An anonymous lock gets treated as abandoned. Name, date, and reason on every tag. A log for numbered locks.

◆ **RADIO SILENCE**
The mechanic is under the machine and the operator cannot see him. The lock is the only thing speaking. It had better say who and why.

◆ **LANGUAGE**
Notification counts only if it is understood. If the crew speaks two languages, the warning goes out in both, and so does the tag legend.

◆ **THE SUPER WHO “JUST NEEDS IT FOR A MINUTE”**
Rank does not remove a lock. The name on it does. See LO-09 for the only legal way a lock comes off without its owner.

⚠ **A LOCK NOBODY WAS TOLD ABOUT IS A LOCK SOMEBODY WILL REMOVE**

The most common way a locked-out machine gets re-energized is not sabotage. It is an operator who was never told, trying to fix what looks like a dead machine. Notification before the lock goes on is not courtesy. It is 1910.147(c)(9), and it is the step that keeps the hardware from being tested by a person who does not know what it is for.

05 WHY IT MATTERS

[JOBSITE]

FOR THE CREW

A crew that announces every lockout at the huddle and on the radio has fewer “who locked this?” moments, fewer cut locks, and a clean answer when an inspector asks how affected employees are notified. Add it to the daily huddle form and it becomes automatic.

[INDIVIDUAL]

FOR YOU

If you are the one inside the machine, the notification you gave is what keeps the operator’s hand off the switch. If you are the operator, the name on the lock is who to ask. Either way, nobody guesses.

[HOME]

FOR LIFE OFF-SITE

Working on the water heater while someone else is home? Tell them, tape the breaker, and tell them again before you turn it back on. Same three sentences.

06 TODAY’S DRILL

TODAY’S DRILL **SAY THE THREE SENTENCES**

The next lockout on this site today, the authorized employee says all three out loud to every affected employee, in front of the foreman: what is being locked out and why, whose lock it is, and when it is coming back. Then before restart, walk the area and say it again. Affected employees: repeat back who holds the lock. If anyone on the crew cannot name the lock owner, the notification did not happen.

07 CREW DISCUSSION

Take 2 minutes. Pick one.

1. Has anyone found a lock on a machine with no idea who put it there? What did people want to do about it?
2. How does lockout get announced on this site right now? Radio, huddle, or nothing?
3. What happens at shift change here when a machine is still locked out?

08 ATTENDANCE & SIGN-OFF

All attendees confirm they participated in this Toolbox Talk and understand the content covered.

NAME (PRINT)	SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

_____ Date: _____

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