SHARP START

June 1 — Is It Really Locked Out?

While walking through the Palletizer lockout, I observed that the pallet hoist was raised about two feet, and the safety pin was inserted and locked at chest level. This would permit the hoist to move up or down 24 inches, and also permit the counterweight to move.	**Notified the Department Lead Person and pointed out that the pin is supposed to be inserted as close as possible above the hoist to prevent movement. They moved the pin just above the hoist. After further consideration, this ESLP should include a second pin, so if the pallet hoist is stuck at a middle position (which sometimes occurs) and cannot be returned to base, both pins will prevent motion in either direction.**

Most of us have walked up to a piece of equipment, seen the lock, seen the tag, and thought, "Looks good."

That's what makes this month's first observation so valuable.

During a walk-through of the Palletizer lockout, an employee noticed the pallet hoist was secured with a safety pin. At first glance, everything appeared normal. The pin was installed and the lockout was in place. But a closer look revealed something important: the hoist could still move nearly two feet, and the counterweight could move as well. The employee stopped and questioned the setup. That decision matters.

Lockout isn't about checking a box or seeing a device in place. It's about making sure hazardous energy has been controlled. In this case, the safety pin was present, but it wasn't positioned in a way that fully prevented movement. Had someone entered the area assuming the equipment was secure, they could have been exposed to a caught-between, struck-by, or crushing hazard.

What makes situations like this challenging is that the hazard isn't always obvious. When we perform the same lockout repeatedly, it's easy to focus on whether the steps were completed instead of whether the equipment is truly safe. Familiarity can sometimes cause us to overlook conditions that deserve a second look.

The employee didn't stop at identifying the issue. During the discussion, another concern surfaced: what happens if the hoist becomes stuck in a mid-position and can't return to its normal location? That question led to a conversation about whether the existing procedure fully addresses all operating conditions.

That's what strong hazard recognition looks like. Not just finding what's wrong today, but identifying what could go wrong tomorrow.

Hazards

- Unexpected Equipment Movement
- Stored Energy Release
- Struck-by Hazards
- Caught-between hazards
- Crushing Injuries
- Incomplete energy isolation.

Words of Wisdom

The presence of a lock, pin, or tag doesn't guarantee safety. Verification is what protects people. Take the time to confirm that equipment cannot move, shift, or release energy before work begins.

Pause and Think

- How do you verify equipment is truly isolated before starting work?
- Have you ever found a lockout device in place that wasn't fully controlling the hazard?
- What assumptions are easiest to make when performing routine tasks?
- If a procedure doesn't match the conditions in the field, what should you do?
- What could happen if someone trusted the lockout without verifying the equipment was secure?

Closing Thought

The safest employees aren't the ones who assume a system is working. They're the ones who take a second look when something doesn't seem right.