SHARP START

July 1 — Pressure Doesn't Change the Hazard

The crew was asked to retorque flanges on a system while the system was running.	**Told them we were not comfortable with doing the job and asked for a LOTO. Job was rescheduled for the next week when the line was going to be down again.**

Most people don't ignore safety because they want to get hurt.

Sometimes they feel pressure to get the job done.

During a maintenance activity, a crew was asked to re-torque flanges on a system while the system was still operating. Rather than assuming the task could be completed safely or allowing production pressure to influence their decision, the crew recognized the hazard and stopped the work.

The employees explained that the system needed to be properly shut down and isolated before maintenance could begin. Once Lockout/Tagout procedures were completed and hazardous energy was controlled, the work moved forward safely.

One of the biggest challenges in any workplace is balancing production demands with safe work practices. Deadlines, schedules, and unexpected issues can create pressure to keep work moving. When that happens, it can be tempting to believe that a task will "only take a minute" or that the risk is acceptable.

Life-saving procedures like Lockout/Tagout exist because hazardous energy doesn't care how experienced we are or how quickly the task can be completed. Every employee has both the authority and the responsibility to stop work whenever conditions are unsafe.

In this situation, the crew demonstrated exactly what a strong safety culture looks like. They respectfully spoke up, refused to accept unnecessary risk, and ensured the job was completed the right way.

Hazards

- Exposure to hazardous energy
- Line of fire hazard
- Serious injury or fatality
- Production pressure influencing decision-making

Words of Wisdom

Doing the job safely sometimes means stopping the job. Production goals can be rescheduled an injury can change a life forever. Never allow pressure, assumptions, or urgency to replace proper Lockout/Tagout procedures.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever felt pressure to complete a job that didn't seem safe?
- What would you do if you were asked to perform work before hazardous energy was properly isolated?
- How can supervisors and coworkers support employees who exercise Stop Work Authority?
- Why is it important to verify that equipment is properly locked out, even when someone tells you it is safe?
- What does a strong safety culture look like when production and safety appear to conflict?

Closing Thought

Real leadership isn't measured by how quickly a job gets done, it's measured by having the courage to stop when something isn't safe.

SHARP START

July 2 – The Shortcut Isn't Shorter

Another contractor was riding on the forks of their forklift while it was moving!!	**Told them to knock off the horse play before they get hurt!!**

Unsafe shortcuts often start with one simple thought...

"It'll only take a second."

A contractor was observed riding on the forks of a moving forklift instead of using the proper equipment to access the work area. While it may have seemed like a quick way to get from one place to another, the risk was significant.

Forklifts are designed to move materials not transport people. A sudden stop, uneven ground, a sharp turn, or an unexpected movement could easily cause someone to fall from the forks or become caught between the forklift and another object.

Many serious incidents happen because people become comfortable taking shortcuts that "have always worked before." Over time, those shortcuts begin to feel normal, even though the hazard never changes.

Taking a few extra minutes to get the right equipment is always a better choice than risking a life-changing injury.

Hazards

- Fall from elevation
- Crushing or caught between hazards
- Unexpected forklift movement
- Improper use of equipment
- Normalization of unsafe shortcuts

Words of Wisdom

The safest way is not always the fastest way—but it's always the right way. Equipment should only be used for the purpose it was designed for.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever seen someone use equipment for something it wasn't designed to do?
- Why do shortcuts sometimes become accepted as "normal" on a job site?
- What could happen if the forklift hit a bump or stopped suddenly?
- What equipment should be used instead of riding on forklift forks?
- How would you address a coworker or contractor if you observed this behavior?

Closing Thought

Shortcuts save seconds—but they can cost someone a lifetime. Choose the right equipment every time.

SHARP START

July 3 — The Small Details Hold the Biggest Loads

Cable clamps were on backwards hanging a 20inch carbon pipe	**Barricaded off chain falls repicked the pipe then clamps were reinstalled properly**

Sometimes the difference between a safe lift and a serious incident is only a few inches...

...or the direction of a single cable clamp.

During a rigging inspection, employees noticed that the cable clamps on a wire rope assembly supporting a 20-inch carbon steel pipe had been installed backwards. At first glance, the rigging appeared complete, but a closer inspection revealed a critical installation error that could have compromised the integrity of the lift.

Instead of assuming everything was acceptable because the work had already been completed, the crew stopped the lift, corrected the installation, and verified the rigging before proceeding.

Rigging failures rarely happen because of one major mistake. More often, they result from small details that are overlooked, skipped, or assumed to be correct. Taking a few extra moments to inspect equipment and question something that doesn't look right can prevent dropped loads, equipment damage, and serious injuries.

Hazards

- Rigging failure
- Dropped load
- Struck by hazards
- Improper rigging practices
- Failure to verify equipment before lifting

Words of Wisdom

A successful lift begins long before the load leaves the ground. Never assume rigging is correct simply because it has already been assembled. Take the time to inspect, verify, and speak up if something doesn't look right.

Pause and Think

- What small details do you look for before making a lift?
- Have you ever stopped a job because something "just didn't look right"?
- Why is it important to inspect rigging, even if someone else assembled it?
- What could happen if a cable clamp is installed incorrectly?
- How can we encourage everyone on the crew to question something that appears unsafe?

Closing Thought

Most lifting incidents aren't caused by the load, they're caused by overlooked details. The best riggers never stop verifying.

SHARP START

July 6 — Don't Wait Until Your Body Decides for You

Employees were working in an extremely hot area of the plant where temperatures and radiant heat significantly increased the risk of heat stress.	**The Workers had identified heat stress on their JHA and customer safe work. They wore cool ice vests and took water breaks to prevent Heat illness. Good job of being aware of the hazards in the work Area even the unseen ones.**

Heat stress doesn't happen all at once...

It builds one decision at a time.

Employees were working in an area of the plant where extreme temperatures created a high risk for heat stress. Instead of waiting until someone became overheated or began showing symptoms, the crew recognized the conditions before work started and took steps to reduce the risk.

Cooling vests were worn, water was readily available, and planned breaks were taken throughout the job. By adjusting how the work was performed not just pushing through the heat the crew was able to complete the task safely.

One of the biggest mistakes employees make during hot weather is believing they can "push through it." Heat stress often develops gradually, making it easy to overlook early warning signs. Fatigue, dehydration, and reduced concentration don't just affect your body they also affect your judgment, reaction time, and ability to recognize hazards.

Taking a short break to cool down isn't a sign of weakness it's part of working safely.

Hazards

- Heat stress and heat exhaustion
- Dehydration
- Reduced concentration and slower reaction time
- Fatigue
- Increased risk of mistakes and injuries

Words of Wisdom

You can't outwork heat you have to outsmart it. Plan ahead, stay hydrated, take breaks, and watch for changes in yourself and your coworkers before heat stress becomes a medical emergency.

Pause and Think

- What are some early signs that you or a coworker may be experiencing heat stress?
- Have you ever pushed through the heat longer than you should have? What happened?
- How can planning breaks and hydration improve both safety and productivity?
- Why is it important to look out for coworkers when working in hot environments?
- What adjustments can be made to reduce heat exposure before work even begins?

Closing Thought

The best time to prevent heat stress is before anyone feels its effects. Recognize the conditions, adjust the plan, and take care of yourself and your team.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something

SHARP START

July 7 — Keep Your Hands Out of the Line of Fire

Employee was removing the DT shaft coupler with chain fall and come along and he had his fingers in a spot where when the coupler moved and came down it smashed his glove and almost smashed his fingers inside the glove but it barely got him resulting in browsing of the finger tips.	**Had a stand down of that crew and explained to them you don't put your hands between objects. You use bars, etc. so you don't put your hands in the line of fire situations.**

Your hands naturally follow your work...

Make sure they don't follow it into the danger zone.

While removing a DT shaft coupler, an employee was using a chain fall and a come along to move the equipment into position. As tension was applied, the coupler suddenly shifted downward. The employee's glove was caught, bruising their fingertips and narrowly avoiding a much more serious injury.

When we're focused on moving equipment, lining up parts, or getting a stubborn component loose, it's easy to become so focused on the task that we lose track of where our hands are. That's why pinch-point injuries happen so quickly they often occur during the exact moment something finally moves.

Before applying force, take a moment to ask yourself one simple question:

"If this suddenly moves, where will my hands go?"

That one question can prevent a serious injury.

Hazards

- Pinch points
- Caught between hazards
- Unexpected equipment movement
- Stored mechanical energy
- Hand and finger injuries
- Line of Fire exposure

Words of Wisdom

Your hands are often your most valuable tools. Never place them where unexpected movement can trap, pinch, or crush them. If something shifts, your hands should already be in a safe place.

Pause and Think

- Before applying force to a part, do you stop and identify where it could move?
- What pinch points are commonly overlooked during maintenance work?
- How can using pry bars, positioning tools, or changing your body position help keep your hands out of the danger zone?
- Have you ever had a close call because something moved differently than you expected?
- What question can you ask yourself before every task to reduce line-of-fire injuries?

Closing Thought

Equipment doesn't have to move very far to cause a serious injury. Keep your hands out of the line of fire, expect the unexpected, and always give moving parts the space they need.

SHARP START

July 8 — Close Isn't Good Enough

When going through LOTO the department locked out the wrong breaker	**They broke the seal and removed the lock from the wrong breaker and locked the right one out and we reverified the whole lock out**

A lock doesn't make equipment safe...

The correct lock on the correct energy source does.

While preparing equipment for maintenance, employees discovered that the wrong breaker had been locked out. At first glance, it appeared that the Lockout/Tagout process had been completed correctly. However, a careful verification revealed that the breaker controlling the equipment had not actually been isolated.

Because the mistake was caught before work began, the crew was able to correct the lockout and safely complete the job without exposing anyone to hazardous energy.

It's easy to become familiar with equipment you've worked on many times before. Familiarity can lead us to assume we're looking at the right breaker, valve, or disconnect. That's why verification is one of the most important steps in every Lockout/Tagout procedure. We don't verify because we expect someone to make a mistake we verify because everyone is human.

Hazards

- Unexpected equipment startup
- Exposure to hazardous electrical energy
- Incorrect energy isolation
- Assumptions and familiarity
- Serious injury or fatality

Words of Wisdom

A successful Lockout/Tagout doesn't end when the lock is installed—it ends when you've verified the correct energy source has been isolated. Never assume. Always verify.

Pause and Think

- What could have happened if the incorrect breaker had not been discovered?
- Why is verification just as important as placing the lock?
- How can familiarity with equipment increase the risk of making a mistake?
- What steps do you take to confirm you've identified the correct breaker or disconnect?
- How can a second set of eyes help prevent LOTO errors?

Closing Thought

Locking out the wrong breaker creates a false sense of security. The safest crews don't just apply locks they verify that every source of hazardous energy has been isolated before anyone begins work.

SHARP START

July 9 — The Hazard Can Change While You're Working

Was working on limestone feeder, grinding and welding when I noticed coal dust falling down	**Went a floor up and told coworker to come back later when we're done**

Just because the job started safely...

...doesn't mean it stayed that way.

While performing grinding and welding on a limestone feeder, an employee noticed coal dust beginning to fall into the work area. What had started as a routine hot work task quickly became a much different situation.

Instead of continuing and hoping nothing would happen, the employee recognized that the work environment had changed and stopped the job. The area was evaluated, the source of the coal dust was addressed, and work only resumed after it was safe to do so.

One of the biggest challenges during any job is staying aware of changing conditions. It's easy to become focused on the task at hand and overlook new hazards that develop around you. Safe work isn't just about checking conditions before you begin—it's about continually asking, **"Has anything changed?"**

Recognizing those changes before an incident occurs is what prevents injuries and serious events.

Hazards

- Fire and explosion hazards
- Combustible dust
- Hot work ignition sources
- Changing work conditions
- Reduced situational awareness

Words of Wisdom

A Job Hazard Analysis isn't a one-time event. Conditions can change throughout the day, and when they do, it's your responsibility to stop, reassess, and adjust the plan before continuing.

Pause and Think

- What changed during this job that increased the risk?
- Have you ever stopped work because conditions changed after the job had already started?
- How can focusing too much on the task cause us to miss new hazards around us?
- What should you do anytime conditions change during a job?
- How can crews help each other recognize changing hazards before someone gets hurt?

Closing Thought

The safest employees don't just watch the job—they watch the environment around the job. When conditions change, the plan should change too.

SHARP START

July 10 — Doing the Right Thing When No One Is Watching

While working at facility, the customer explained that their policy did not require employees to wear a harness while operating a scissor lift. Even though the site allowed it, A-Lert employees followed company policy and wore the required fall protection throughout the job.	**The crew followed A-Lert's fall protection requirements, demonstrating that our safety standards remain the same regardless of where we are working.**

Safety isn't defined by the lowest standard...

It's defined by the choices we make every day.

While working at another facility, the crew needed to use a scissor lift. The customer explained that their site did not require employees to wear fall protection while operating the lift. It would have been easy to follow the site's minimum requirement and move on with the job.

Instead, an A-Lert supervisor reminded everyone that our company's fall protection requirements still applied. The crew wore the appropriate PPE, followed company policy, and completed the work safely.

Doing the right thing isn't always about following the easiest path it's about staying committed to the standards that protect us, even when no one would question a different choice. Safety culture is built one decision at a time, and those decisions become habits that employees carry from one jobsite to the next.

Hazards

- Falls from elevation
- Complacency
- Adapting to lower safety standards
- Inconsistent work practices
- Increased risk of injury

Words of Wisdom

Your safety values shouldn't change with your jobsite. Strong safety cultures are built by consistently doing the right thing—even when a different choice would be easier or accepted by others.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever worked somewhere with different safety rules than your own company?
- Why is it important to maintain the same safety standards wherever you work?
- How do consistent work habits help prevent injuries?
- What message does it send when employees choose to exceed the minimum safety requirements?
- How can experienced employees set an example for others on the job?

Closing Thought

Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching. A strong safety culture isn't built by rules alone, it's built by people who choose to uphold them every day.

SHARP START

July 13 — Communication Is Only Effective When It's Understood

When unloading the trailer, forklift driver was creeping up to the trailer and there were no signals or motions to stop and punctured into the tire. Signal guy said he said, "Stop." But operator did not hear it.	**Safety stand down about complacency & correct people signaling the operators.**

Good communication isn't just about giving directions...

It's about making sure they're understood.

During a forklift operation, a spotter was directing the operator while unloading a trailer. At some point, the operator misunderstood the hand signals being given and continued moving in the wrong direction, puncturing the trailer tire.

Fortunately, no one was injured, but the outcome could have been much worse if employees had been standing nearby or if the load had shifted unexpectedly.

We often assume that because we're talking—or signaling—everyone understands the message. In reality, communication is a two-way process. If there is uncertainty, confusion, or even a brief hesitation, it's time to stop and clarify before moving equipment.

The safest crews don't guess what someone means. They stop, ask questions, and make sure everyone is on the same page before continuing.

Hazards

- Miscommunication
- Mobile equipment incidents
- Struck by hazards
- Property damage
- Assumptions during critical tasks

Words of Wisdom

Communication isn't successful because words or signals were given—it's successful when everyone understands the same message. When in doubt, stop and clarify before moving.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever misunderstood directions during a task?
- What should an operator do if a hand signal isn't clear?
- How can spotters and operators confirm they understand each other before moving equipment?
- Why is it important to stop work instead of guessing what someone meant?
- Besides forklifts, where else is clear communication critical to working safely?

Closing Thought

A few seconds spent confirming a message can prevent an incident that lasts a lifetime. Never assume—communicate, confirm, and then continue.

SHARP START

July 14 — Listen When Equipment Is Telling You Something

Me and my foreman went up a platform to look at new location for pipe support. We observed the fan that was running the whole shaft was moving in an out a lot. We went to the other side, and the big pillow blocks were totally loose.	**Notified customers management**

Equipment usually gives us warning signs...

The question is whether we recognize them before something fails.

During routine work, employees noticed that a fan shaft and its pillow blocks had become loose while the equipment was still running. Although the equipment was still operating, something wasn't right.

Instead of assuming the issue could wait until the next shutdown or that someone else would report it, the employees acted immediately. The equipment was taken out of service, inspected, and repaired before a mechanical failure could occur.

Many equipment failures don't happen without warning. Unusual vibration, strange noises, loose components, excessive heat, or leaks are often early signs that something needs attention. The sooner those warning signs are recognized and reported, the greater the opportunity to prevent equipment damage, unplanned downtime, and injuries.

Hazards

- Mechanical equipment failure
- Flying debris
- Struck by hazards
- Rotating equipment
- Unexpected equipment damage

Words of Wisdom

Abnormal sounds, movement, vibration, or loose components should never be ignored. If something doesn't look, sound, or feel right, stop and report it before a small problem becomes a serious incident.

Pause and Think

- What warning signs tell you that equipment may be developing a problem?
- Have you ever noticed something unusual and wondered if it was worth reporting?
- Why do people sometimes continue working around equipment that "doesn't seem quite right"?
- How can reporting small issues early prevent larger failures later?
- What equipment do you work around every day that deserves a closer look?

Closing Thought

Equipment can't tell us what's wrong—but it often shows us. The safest employees notice the warning signs, trust their instincts, and take action before a minor issue becomes a major failure.

SHARP START

July 15 — One Missing Lock Changes Everything

While going through the lockout we realized a lock on an air valve was not put on.	**We stopped, cut the seal, and fixed the lockout. We then had it second verified by customers employee and then got on the lock out.**

A lockout isn't complete until every energy source is controlled.

One missed lock can make the entire process unsafe.

While completing a Lockout/Tagout walkthrough, the crew discovered that an air valve had been overlooked during the isolation process. Although the majority of the lockout had been completed correctly, one source of hazardous energy remained capable of creating a dangerous situation.

Fortunately, the missing lock was identified before maintenance began. The crew immediately corrected the lockout, verified all isolation points, and ensured the equipment was safe before starting work.

Lockout/Tagout isn't about checking boxes—it's about controlling **every** source of hazardous energy. Electrical, pneumatic, hydraulic, mechanical, thermal, and stored energy all deserve the same level of attention. Missing just one isolation point can leave employees with a false sense of security.

That's why walkthroughs and verification are such an important part of every successful lockout.

Hazards

- Uncontrolled pneumatic energy
- Unexpected equipment movement
- Incomplete Lockout/Tagout
- False sense of security
- Serious injury or fatality

Words of Wisdom

A lockout is only complete when **every** hazardous energy source has been identified, isolated, locked, and verified. Never assume someone else caught everything, take the time to verify it yourself.

Pause and Think

- Besides electricity, what other hazardous energy sources should be included in a lockout?
- Why is it easy to overlook valves or secondary isolation points?
- How do walkthroughs help identify missed isolation points before work begins?
- Have you ever found something during a final verification that could have been missed?
- What can your crew do to make Lockout/Tagout verification even stronger?

Closing Thought

One missed lock can create a false sense of safety. The best Lockout/Tagout procedures don't rely on assumptions; they rely on careful verification and teamwork to ensure every source of hazardous energy is controlled.

SHARP START

July 16 — If You Can't See, Don't Move

Employee was operating a forklift with limited sight; spotter should've been in position and wasn't. The operator failed to see the side of another piece of equipment and caused minor damage.	**Operator got off. Took a moment and allowed another operator to continue moving parts to continue.**

Just because the forklift can move...

...doesn't mean it's safe to do so.

While transporting a load with limited visibility, a forklift operator continued moving even though a spotter was not in position. Without a clear view of the travel path, the operator failed to see another piece of equipment and made contact, resulting in minor damage.

Fortunately, the incident only damaged equipment. If a coworker had been in the blind spot, the outcome could have been much more serious.

Every forklift has blind spots, and every operator will eventually encounter a load that blocks their view. That's exactly why spotters exist. Their job isn't simply to direct traffic—it's to provide the visibility the operator doesn't have.

When visibility is limited, stopping to get a spotter isn't slowing the job down—it's preventing an incident.

Hazards

- Limited visibility
- Struck by hazards
- Blind spots
- Property damage
- Pedestrian exposure
- Failure to use a spotter

Words of Wisdom

If you can't clearly see where you're going, you shouldn't keep moving. A few moments spent positioning a spotter is far better than dealing with the consequences of guessing what's ahead.

Pause and Think

- What situations make it difficult to see while operating mobile equipment?
- When should a spotter be used?
- Have you ever felt tempted to "just ease forward" even though you couldn't see clearly?
- What responsibilities do both the operator and the spotter have before equipment starts moving?
- How can better communication between operators and spotters prevent incidents?

Closing Thought

Blind spots don't cause incidents—moving without knowing what's in them does. When visibility is limited, stop, get a spotter, and make sure every move is a safe one.

SHARP START

July 17 — The Best Safety Reminder Came From a Coworker

When I came back from lunch break noticed elec unbundling unastrut, one of the employees didn't have his gloves on, before I could say anything to him his partner said "put your damn gloves on".	**I told the guy thanks for telling his partner to put on his gloves and look out for each other.**

The strongest safety culture isn't built by supervisors...

It's built by coworkers who care enough to speak up.

While walking through the work area after lunch, an employee noticed a crew unbundling Unistrut. One of the workers wasn't wearing gloves, creating a hand injury hazard.

Before anyone else had a chance to say something, the employee's partner noticed it too and simply reminded them, **"Hey, put your gloves on."** The employee immediately grabbed their gloves, put them on, and continued working safely.

This wasn't about enforcing a rule—it was about looking out for a teammate.

The best safety cultures are built when employees don't wait for a supervisor to identify hazards. They take responsibility for each other's safety because they understand that everyone deserves to go home in the same condition they arrived.

Speaking up doesn't always require a formal conversation. Sometimes it's a simple reminder that prevents an injury.

Hazards

- Hand injuries
- Cuts and abrasions
- Complacency after returning from break
- Failure to wear required PPE
- Missed opportunities to intervene

Words of Wisdom

Looking out for your coworkers is one of the most valuable safety tools on any job site. A simple reminder today could prevent a serious injury tomorrow.

Pause and Think

- Would you feel comfortable reminding a coworker if you noticed something unsafe?
- How would you want someone to approach you if they noticed you had forgotten your PPE?
- Why is it important that safety reminders come from everyone not just supervisors?
- Have you ever prevented an incident by speaking up?
- What does this observation tell us about a strong safety culture?

Closing Thought

The best crew don't just work together, they protect one another. Never underestimate the impact of a simple reminder given at the right time.

SHARP START

July 20 — Your Work Area Is Bigger Than You Think

No barricade around tanks. Iron workers dropped tape measures and sockets from 2nd or 3rd floor and wind kicked up wood and fell through the tank hole. Along with other trades pushing water towards sleeves and hole penetrations causing water to fall down onto workers on lower floors.	**A-Lert safety was notified of issue, and barricades were put in place**

The hazards you create may not affect you...

They may affect the person working below you.

While work was taking place around open tank areas, several hazards developed at the same time. Tools were accidentally dropped from upper levels, strong winds carried loose debris through floor openings, and water from another trade flowed through penetrations onto employees working below.

Individually, each issue may have seemed minor. Together, they created a work environment where employees below were exposed to hazards they had little control over.

One of the biggest challenges on multi-contractor jobs is remembering that your work doesn't happen in isolation. Every task has the potential to affect someone working nearby, below, or even in another area of the project. Before starting work, it's important to ask not only, **"Is my work area safe?"** but also, **"Who else could be affected by what I'm doing?"**

Hazards

- Dropped objects
- Struck-by hazards
- Open floor and tank penetrations
- Falling debris
- Water creating slip hazards below
- Lack of barricades and work coordination

Words of Wisdom

Always look beyond your immediate task. A safe work area protects not only the people doing the work, but everyone who could be affected by it.

Pause and Think

- Who could be affected by the work you're performing today?
- What steps can you take to protect employees working below or nearby?
- How do barricades help protect people who aren't directly involved in your task?
- Have you ever been exposed to hazards created by another crew?
- What can different trades do to improve communication and coordination on shared job sites?

Closing Thought

Safety doesn't end at the edge of your work area. Think beyond your task, protect those around you, and remember that every crew shares responsibility for a safe jobsite.

SHARP START

July 21 — Let the Tool Do the Work

Observed employee moving pipe with hand holding the end of the pipe.	**Stopped employee and educated them on the hazards to not do that. Showed them the proper use of a tag line and or no touch tools wheel handling suspended material.**

Your hands should never become the guide for a moving load.

That's exactly why tag lines exist.

While guiding pipe into position, an employee instinctively reached out with their hands to help control the load. Although it may have seemed like the quickest way to make a small adjustment, it placed their hands and body directly in the line of fire if the load shifted, swung, or dropped unexpectedly.

The situation was recognized before anyone was injured, and the crew stopped to use a tag line instead. By allowing the tool to control the load, employees were able to maintain a safe distance while completing the lift.

When we're trying to line something up "just a little," it's natural to want to reach out and help. But suspended loads don't give second chances. Even a small movement can create enough force to crush fingers, trap hands, or knock someone off balance.

Hazards

- Line of fire
- Pinch points
- Suspended loads
- Struck by hazards
- Hand and finger injuries
- Improper load control

Words of Wisdom

Never use your hands where a tag line, positioning tool, or another safe method can do the job. The farther you are from a suspended load, the safer you are.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever been tempted to "just guide it" with your hands?
- Why do suspended loads sometimes move in ways we don't expect?
- What advantages does a tag line provide during lifting operations?
- How can you keep yourself out of the line of fire when positioning a load?
- Are there tasks in your work where the right tool can eliminate the need to put your hands in danger?

Closing Thought

Hands heal slowly—and some injuries never fully heal at all. Keep your distance, trust the proper tools, and never place yourself between a moving load and a fixed object.

SHARP START

July 22 — Verify the Valve, Not Just the Lock

On walk through for mvr#1 annual shut down, observed lock installed on the wrong valve.	**Informed the operator of the location of the lock. Installed additional lock on the correct valve and put new seal on lock box.**

A lock on the wrong valve provides the same protection...

...as no lock at all.

During the pre-job Lockout/Tagout walkthrough for the MVR #1 annual shutdown, the crew identified that a lock had been placed on the wrong valve. At first glance, everything appeared to be in order—but the valve controlling the hazardous energy had not actually been isolated.

Because the error was found during the walkthrough, the crew corrected the lockout before any maintenance work began.

Equipment can have valves that look nearly identical, are located close together, or have similar identification tags. That's why Lockout/Tagout requires more than simply placing a lock. Every isolation point must be positively identified and verified before anyone begins work.

Taking a few extra moments to confirm the correct valve is far easier than dealing with the consequences of unexpected energy release.

Hazards

- Incorrect energy isolation
- Unexpected release of hazardous energy
- Similar or mislabeled equipment
- False sense of security
- Serious injury or fatality

Words of Wisdom

A lock only protects you when it's installed on the correct isolation point. Slow down, verify equipment identification, and never assume the first valve you find is the right one.

Pause and Think

- How can similar-looking valves or equipment increase the chance of an error?
- What steps do you take to positively identify the correct isolation point?
- Why is the Lockout/Tagout walkthrough such an important part of the process?
- Have you ever made a mistake during a final verification that could have led to an incident?
- How can teamwork and a second set of eyes strengthen your Lockout/Tagout process?

Closing Thought

The purpose of Lockout/Tagout isn't simply to place a lock—it's to eliminate hazardous energy. Every lock, every valve, and every verification matters.

SHARP START

July 23 — Temporary Fixes Can Create Permanent Problems

A railcar brake shoe (or similar heavy steel component) was found being used as a door stop to hold open the east rail bay doors in the Elevator Department. The object was not designed for this purpose and was left in a pedestrian travel path. Improper use of a heavy steel object as a door stop creates a trip hazard and potential foot injury if moved or kicked. The object could also become a struck-by hazard if displaced by door movement, equipment traffic, or high winds.	**Recommended installation of an approved door stop or door hold-open device if required for normal operations.**

Just because something works...

...doesn't mean it's the safest solution.

During a walk-through of the Elevator Department, employees found a railcar brake shoe being used to hold open a bay door. While it may have seemed like a convenient solution, the heavy steel object wasn't designed for that purpose and had become another hazard in the work area.

Placed in a pedestrian travel path, the brake shoe created a trip hazard and could have caused a serious foot injury if kicked or dropped. If the door moved unexpectedly due to equipment traffic or strong winds, the heavy steel object could also become a struck-by hazard.

Temporary fixes often seem harmless because they solve an immediate problem. However, over time those quick solutions can become "the way we've always done it," causing us to overlook the new hazards they've introduced.

Before using a tool, piece of equipment, or material for something it wasn't designed to do, ask yourself whether there's a safer, more appropriate solution.

Hazards

- Trip hazards
- Foot and ankle injuries
- Struck by hazards
- Improper use of equipment
- Housekeeping and Pedestrian Hazards
- Normalization of temporary fixes

Words of Wisdom

Temporary solutions have a way of becoming permanent habits. Use the right equipment for the right purpose, and don't let convenience create a new hazard.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever seen an object being used for something it wasn't designed to do?
- What hazards can temporary fixes create over time?
- Why do these types of shortcuts become "normal" in the workplace?
- What is the proper way to address a recurring problem instead of creating a workaround?
- What temporary fixes around your work area should be replaced with a permanent solution?

Closing Thought

The easiest solution isn't always the safest one. Before creating a quick fix, ask yourself whether you're solving one problem—or creating another.

SHARP START

July 24 — Don't Wait Until Someone Asks for Help

Employees asked me to stop by and check out something he was working on. He had been there all morning working on this piece of equipment and was going to be there for the rest of the day or more. While I was there, I noticed it was quite warm and he was sweating profusely. (Literally dripping)	**To help cool him off and reduce the risk of a heat related illness I went down and got him my battery powered fan and a hot work. He thanked me once he felt that nice breeze.**

One of the first signs of heat stress...

...may be noticed by someone else.

An employee had spent most of the morning working on the same piece of equipment and expected to continue the job for the rest of the day. When a coworker stopped by to review the work, they immediately noticed the employee was sweating heavily and showing signs that the heat was beginning to take its toll.

Rather than ignoring the situation or assuming the employee would say something if they needed help, the coworker spoke up. The employee took time to cool down, hydrate, and recover before continuing the task.

Heat stress often develops gradually. As our body temperature rises, fatigue increases, concentration decreases, and decision-making becomes more difficult. In many cases, the person experiencing heat stress may not recognize how serious it has become.

That's why looking out for each other is one of the most effective ways to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Hazards

- Heat stress
- Heat exhaustion
- Dehydration
- Fatigue
- Reduced concentration and decision making
- Delayed recognition of heat illness

Words of Wisdom

Heat stress doesn't always announce itself. Pay attention to your coworkers as much as you pay attention to yourself. A simple conversation could prevent a serious medical emergency.

Pause and Think

- What are some early warning signs that a coworker may be experiencing heat stress?
- Why might someone continue working even when they're becoming overheated?
- How can checking in with a coworker help prevent a heat-related illness?
- What steps should you take if you notice someone showing signs of heat exhaustion?
- How can your crew work together to stay safe during hot weather?

Closing Thought

Sometimes the best safety tool isn't a piece of equipment, it's a coworker who notices something isn't right. Look out for one another, especially when working in the heat.

SHARP START

July 27 — Five Seconds That Could Save Your Fingers

During a pre-use inspection, an employee found a grinder with a defective guard.	**Red tagged the grinder and took it out of use**

The most dangerous tool isn't always the one that's being used...

It's the one that wasn't inspected first.

During a routine pre-use inspection, an employee discovered that a grinder had a defective guard. Although the grinder appeared ready for use, the damaged guard could no longer provide the protection it was designed for.

Instead of using the grinder "just one more time," the employee removed it from service and obtained a safe replacement before starting the task.

It's easy to overlook a quick tool inspection when the job is waiting and the tool appears to be in working order. However, grinder guards are designed to help protect the operator from wheel fragments, sparks, and accidental contact with the rotating wheel. Taking only a few moments to inspect a tool before use can prevent an injury that lasts a lifetime.

Hazards

- Flying debris
- Wheel failure
- Contact with rotating equipment
- Eye and face injuries
- Defective tools and equipment
- Failure to perform pre-use inspections

Words of Wisdom

Never assume a tool is safe because it worked yesterday. Every job deserves a fresh inspection. If a safety device is damaged or missing, remove the tool from service and get one that's safe to use.

Pause and Think

- What safety features should you inspect before using a grinder?
- Have you ever found a damaged tool during a pre-use inspection?
- Why is it tempting to use a defective tool "just one last time"?
- What should you do if the only available tool isn't safe to use?
- How can a few minutes spent inspecting equipment prevent a serious injury?

Closing Thought

A grinder can be replaced. Your eyesight, your hands, and your health cannot. Take a few moments to inspect your tools before every job—those few seconds could make all the difference.

SHARP START

July 28 — Never Trust a Load to Stay Still

I was operating the forklift flipping a piece of 12 inch pipe to be welded. An employee had his hand on the jack stand, and the strap was rolled on the pipe. The pipe could possibly fall and smashed his hand in between itself and the jack stand.	**I shut the forklift down, stopped the job explaining the hazard to the employee told him what the repercussions would be. If he kept his hand, there in the pipe fell on it. He said he understood apologize and we move forward with our job.**

Heavy materials don't have to fall far...

They only have to move far enough to hurt someone.

While rotating a 12-inch pipe into position with a forklift, an employee rested their hand on a nearby jack stand while the pipe remained supported by a lifting strap. Although everything appeared stable, any unexpected movement could have trapped the employee's hand between the pipe and the stand.

Before the lift continued, the hazard was recognized and the employee moved to a safe location. The crew used the opportunity to discuss staying out of pinch points anytime a load is suspended, supported, or being repositioned.

When we're focused on lining up material, it's easy to rest a hand on nearby equipment or reach into an area without thinking about what could happen if the load shifts. Even a small movement from a heavy object can generate enough force to cause a serious injury.

Before every lift or repositioning task, ask yourself:

"If this moves unexpectedly, where will my hands and body be?"

Hazards

- Pinch points
- Line of fire
- Suspended and supported loads
- Crushed hand and finger injuries
- Unexpected load movement
- Material handling hazards

Words of Wisdom

Never place your hands where heavy material can move unexpectedly. Stay out of the line of fire, expect the unexpected, and let proper tools—not your hands—control the load.

Pause and Think

- Where are pinch points commonly found when positioning heavy materials?
- Have you ever caught yourself resting a hand on equipment while focusing on another task?
- Why is it dangerous to assume a suspended or supported load won't move?
- What can crews do to remind one another to stay out of the line of fire?
- Before moving a load, do you stop and ask, **"Where will my hands be if this shifts?"**

Closing Thought

Heavy materials don't give warnings before they move. Keep your hands clear, stay out of the line of fire, and never place yourself where one unexpected shift can change your life.

SHARP START

July 29 — Every Lock Protects a Life

My coworker was helping me to close the north economizer and he forgot to install this lock on the lockbox	**I stop him and show him where the lockbox was**

One missing lock may seem like a small oversight...

But every lock represents someone's life.

While preparing to complete a Lockout/Tagout on the north economizer, a crew member noticed that a coworker had forgotten to install their personal lock on the group lockbox. Although the rest of the lockout had been completed correctly, the missing lock meant the process was not finished.

The oversight was caught before work began, the employee installed their personal lock, and the crew verified that everyone working on the equipment was properly protected.

When we've completed the same process many times, it's easy to become distracted, interrupted, or simply forget a step. That's why Lockout/Tagout depends on both personal responsibility and teamwork. Looking out for one another isn't questioning someone's ability—it's making sure everyone goes home safely.

A personal lock isn't just another step in the procedure. It's your personal protection against someone restoring hazardous energy before you're safely clear of the equipment.

Hazards

- Incomplete Lockout/Tagout
- Unexpected equipment startup
- Hazardous energy exposure
- Human error and distractions
- False sense of security

Words of Wisdom

Your personal lock is your personal protection. Never assume someone else has completed every step. Take the time to verify your lock is installed and help your coworkers do the same.

Pause and Think

- Why is every employee responsible for placing their own personal lock?
- What distractions or interruptions could cause someone to miss a step in the Lockout/Tagout process?
- How can coworkers respectfully verify that everyone is properly locked out?
- Why is a group lockbox only effective when every required lock has been installed?
- What habits can help prevent small oversights during critical safety procedures?

Closing Thought

Lockout/Tagout isn't complete until every person is protected. One missing lock can put a coworker at risk—but one attentive coworker can prevent an incident before it happens.

SHARP START

July 30 — What Falls From Above Doesn't Give a Warning

Another contractor was dropping items from scaffolding without danger tape	**Stopped contractor and told him he needed to put up danger tape if overhead items were going to be dropped**

Dropped objects don't have to be large...

They only have to hit the wrong place.

During overhead work, a contractor was lowering—or allowing—tools and materials to fall from scaffolding without first establishing a barricaded danger zone below. Anyone walking through the area could have been struck by a falling object without warning.

Fortunately, the unsafe condition was recognized before someone was injured. The work was stopped, the area was barricaded, and the crew discussed safer methods for handling materials at elevation.

When working above others, it's easy to focus on the task in front of you and forget about the people below. A tape measure, socket, bolt, or small hand tool may not seem dangerous while it's in your hand, but once gravity takes over, even a small object can cause a serious injury.

Barricades don't just protect the crew performing the work—they protect everyone else who has no idea a hazard exists overhead.

Hazards

- Dropped objects
- Struck by hazards
- Overhead work
- Failure to establish barricades
- Pedestrian exposure
- Improper material handling

Words of Wisdom

If work is taking place overhead, protect the area below. Barricades, communication, and proper material handling help ensure that everyone, not just the crew doing the work goes home safely.

Pause and Think

- What types of objects could become serious hazards if dropped from overhead?
- When should a barricaded danger zone be established?
- What are safer alternatives to dropping tools or materials from elevation?
- How can crews make sure people below are protected before overhead work begins?
- If you saw someone working overhead without a barricade, what would you do?

Closing Thought

Gravity doesn't make exceptions. Every object dropped from above has the potential to injure someone below. Protect the people who can't see the hazard coming.

SHARP START

July 31 — Every Alarm Has a Purpose

Contractor was power washing the extractor when they found a pocket of hexane which set off the alarms which indicated there is a hexane leak.	**Got everyone to evacuate the extraction building and out to the parking lot.**

Alarms aren't meant to interrupt your work...

They're meant to protect your life.

While power washing the extractor, a contractor disturbed a pocket of hexane vapor that activated the area's gas detection system. The alarm indicated the possible presence of a flammable atmosphere, requiring immediate action.

Rather than assuming the alarm was a malfunction or trying to finish the task, work stopped immediately and employees followed established emergency procedures until the area could be evaluated and declared safe.

It's easy to become familiar with alarms, especially in facilities where they are tested or occasionally activate for unexpected reasons. However, every alarm should be treated as real until proven otherwise. The few minutes spent responding appropriately are insignificant compared to the consequences of ignoring a warning that turns out to be genuine.

Emergency procedures only work when everyone responds quickly, calmly, and consistently.

Hazards

- Flammable vapor release
- Fire and explosion hazards
- Hazardous atmosphere
- Failure to respond to alarms
- Delayed evacuation
- Complacency toward warning systems

Words of Wisdom

Alarms are designed to warn us before an incident occurs. Never assume an alarm is "just a false alarm." Stop work, follow established procedures, and allow the situation to be evaluated before returning to the area.

Pause and Think

- How should you respond when a gas detection alarm activates?
- Why can familiarity with alarms lead to complacency?
- What could happen if someone ignores or delays responding to an alarm?
- Are you familiar with your site's emergency response and evacuation procedures?
- How can your actions during an emergency help protect both yourself and your coworkers?

Closing Thought

The best emergency response is the one that happens immediately. Every alarm deserves your attention, every time. Treat it seriously, follow the plan, and never assume someone else will respond for you.