SHARP START

October 1 — Don't Ignore the Warning Signs

Employee stated lift was staling out. Asked had they checked fluids and stopped them from using the lift.	**Inspected lift with them and a very faint display screen showed low coolant. Had them get the rental company to add fluid to the lift. Talked about thorough inspections.**

A Problem Is a Warning, Not an Inconvenience

An employee reported that the lift was stalling out. Instead of continuing to use it and hoping the problem would go away, the lift was stopped and the condition was investigated.

During the inspection, a very faint display on the lift showed low coolant. The rental company was contacted and added fluid to the lift before the equipment was put back into service.

The important lesson is that equipment doesn't always give us a big, obvious warning when something is wrong. Sometimes the first indication is something as simple as a machine not operating the way it normally does. A lift that starts stalling is telling us that something needs attention.

A thorough inspection means more than walking around the equipment and checking the obvious items. We need to pay attention to how the equipment is operating, look for signs that something isn't right, and investigate concerns before continuing to use it.

When someone says, "Something isn't working right," that's information we need to take seriously. Stopping to investigate a problem may take a few extra minutes, but continuing to operate equipment with an unknown problem can create a much bigger issue.

Hazards

- Equipment malfunction during use
- Failure to identify a developing equipment problem
- Incomplete or rushed equipment inspections
- Operating equipment with an unresolved condition
- Missing or overlooking warning indicators
- Equipment damage or unexpected downtime

Words of Wisdom

The equipment doesn't have to fail completely before we pay attention. When something doesn't operate the way it should, stop, investigate the warning signs, and make sure the problem is addressed before putting it back to work.

Pause and Think

- If the equipment isn't operating normally, would you stop and investigate or keep working?
- Do you know what warning indicators to look for on the equipment you operate?
- Are you paying attention to how the equipment is actually performing, not just how it looks during an inspection?
- If you find something you don't understand, who should you contact before continuing?
- Could taking a few extra minutes to investigate a problem prevent a larger equipment issue?

Closing Thought

A machine doesn't have to quit completely to tell us something is wrong. Pay attention to the warning signs, stop when something doesn't seem right, and take the time to find out why.

SHARP START

October 2 – Leave It Safe for the Next Person

Someone had left a test prong in the HOT side of a 120v 15amp. receptacle. this created a potential to get shock from some one trying to plug in to the receptacle.	**I showed our electrical crew's Supervisor and he safely removed the test prong.**

The Job Isn't Safe Just Because You're Finished

A test prong was left in the HOT side of a 120V, 15-amp receptacle. The person who left it may have been finished with whatever testing they were doing, but the hazard didn't leave with them. The exposed prong remained in the receptacle for the next person who might come along and try to use it.

The condition was identified and brought to the electrical crew's supervisor, who safely removed the test prong.

This is a good reminder that we have to think about what we leave behind. Finishing our part of a job doesn't necessarily mean the area is safe for the next person. A tool, test lead, piece of material, or temporary condition can become a hazard when someone else doesn't know it is there.

Electrical hazards can be especially difficult because they aren't always visible. Someone approaching a receptacle may have no reason to expect that a test prong has been left in it. That's why good housekeeping and a final check of our work area matter.

Before walking away from a task, take a moment to look at the equipment and area from the perspective of the next person who will use it. Remove temporary items, return equipment to a safe condition, and make sure we aren't leaving behind a hazard that someone else has to discover.

Hazards

- Electrical shock
- Contact with an energized component
- Unexpected exposure to an electrical hazard
- Leaving tools or test equipment in a hazardous position
- Another employee unknowingly using the receptacle
- Failure to leave the work area in a safe condition

Words of Wisdom

Finishing your task is only part of the job. Before you walk away, look at what you are leaving behind. The next person may not know what you know and they shouldn't have to discover a hazard the hard way.

Pause and Think

- What could someone encounter after you leave your work area?
- Have you removed temporary tools, test equipment, or other items before walking away?
- Could the next person recognize the hazard without you being there to explain it?
- When you finish a task, do you take a final look at the equipment and surrounding area?
- Are you leaving the area ready for the next person to safely use?

Closing Thought

We don't just work safely for ourselves. We work safely for the person who comes after us. Before you leave the job, make sure you haven't left a hazard behind.

SHARP START

October 5 — Your Lock Has to Protect You

Going through LOTO sheet with a couple newish EEs. Was explaining the breaker locations and where to write this information down on the sheet. When doing this I noticed our newest EE had his lock through the first EEs lock not the breaker itself.	**Explained to him that although no one should be removing his lock his lock is actually doing nothing. I believe this is probably the first time he has locked out on anything other than a box. Showed him where and how to lock out on the actual breaker. He thanked me for taking the time to correct him and teach him the proper way.**

A Lock on the Job Doesn't Automatically Mean You're Protected

While going through a LOTO sheet with newer employees, the team was reviewing breaker locations and where that information needed to be recorded. During the walkthrough, an important detail was caught: the newest employee had placed his lock through another employee's lock instead of locking the breaker itself.

The employee had a lock on the job, but his lock was not actually securing the energy isolating device. If the lockout had been left that way, his personal lock would not have provided the protection it was intended to provide.

This was also a good example of why we take the time to teach people who are newer to a task. The observation indicates this may have been the employee's first time locking out something other than a box. Rather than assuming he should already know the process, the issue was identified while the LOTO was being reviewed, and he was shown the proper way to lock out the breaker.

LOTO is not just about putting a lock somewhere on the equipment. You need to understand what your lock is controlling and verify that it is actually securing the energy source. If you're new to a type of lockout, don't guess. Ask someone to walk you through it before you begin.

And if you see someone who may not understand the process, speak up. Taking a few minutes to teach someone the correct method can prevent a serious mistake from becoming an incident.

Hazards

- Lock not securing the actual energy isolating device
- Unexpected equipment energization
- Loss of personal protection
- Incorrect LOTO application
- Assuming a lock is effective without verifying its placement
- New or inexperienced employees performing unfamiliar LOTO tasks

Words of Wisdom

A lock only protects you when it is doing the job it was intended to do. Know what you are locking, know what energy it controls, and never be afraid to ask for help when a lockout is unfamiliar.

Pause and Think

- Is your personal lock actually securing the energy isolating device?
- Do you know exactly what your lock is protecting you from?
- If you're unfamiliar with a type of LOTO, who should you ask for help?
- Are you verifying your lock placement rather than assuming it is correct?
- If you see someone who may not understand the lockout process, are you willing to stop and help?

Closing Thought

Don't assume that having a lock means you are protected. Know where your lock belongs, verify that it is actually securing the energy source, and take the time to learn when the lockout is unfamiliar.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something

SHARP START

October 6 — Don't Remove the Last Line of Defense

Employee was removing bolts on the tail end plate of the drag. He had all the side bolts out working on the very bottom ones	**I told him to put a bolt back in on the sides so the end plate won't fall on him then helped him remove it**

Think About What Is Holding It Before You Remove It

An employee was removing the bolts from the tail end plate of a drag. The side bolts had already been removed, and he was working on the remaining bolts at the very bottom.

At that point, the side bolts were no longer helping hold the end plate in position. Removing the remaining bolts without putting some other form of control in place could allow the plate to fall unexpectedly.

The job was stopped and the employee was told to put a bolt back into the side of the plate before continuing. This kept the end plate from becoming free while the remaining bolts were removed. The observer then helped him finish removing it.

This is a good example of how **the condition of a piece of equipment can change as we take it apart**. A component may be stable when we begin the job, but every bolt, connection, or support we remove can change what is holding it in place.

Before removing the next fastener, stop and ask: **What is holding this piece right now? What will happen when I remove this next bolt?** If the answer isn't clear, stop and figure out how to control the component before continuing.

Taking one bolt out may seem like a small step, but the last few bolts can be the ones that allow a heavy component to move or fall.

Hazards

- Unexpected movement or falling of the end plate
- Struck by hazard
- Caught between or pinch point exposure
- Removing supports before the component is controlled
- Working in the line of fire
- Heavy equipment or components shifting unexpectedly

Words of Wisdom

Every bolt you remove can change what is holding the load. Before taking out the next one, know what will support the component and where it will go if it moves.

Pause and Think

- What is holding the component in place before you remove the next bolt?
- What will happen when the next fastener is removed?
- Could the piece shift, fall, or rotate unexpectedly?
- Are you standing where the component could move if something lets go?
- Do you need to leave a fastener in place or add another method of support before continuing?

Closing Thought

Don't wait for the last bolt to teach you what was holding the equipment together. Think ahead, control the component, and stay out of the line of fire before you remove the next fastener.

SHARP START

October 7 — Before the First Spark

Witnessed a pre-hot work meeting between customer and A-Lert personnel. Customer advised they would get hose stretched out and available for wash down. A-Lert would be responsible from there.	**This is an area that is full of coal piles. A-Lert leader did a great job of communicating with customer and the crew to ensure tasks were assigned and adhered to.**

Good Hot Work Starts With Good Communication

Before hot work begins, there is more to consider than the work itself. The people involved need to understand the job, the conditions around the work, and who is responsible for the controls that have been identified.

This observation is a good example of that being done correctly. A pre-hot-work meeting was held between customer and A-Lert personnel. During the meeting, the customer communicated that they would get the hose stretched out and available for washdown. A-Lert would be responsible from there.

That clear discussion established who was responsible for what before the work began. The A-Lert leader also did a good job communicating with the customer and the crew to make sure the tasks were assigned and adhered to.

The location made that planning especially important because the work was taking place in an area with full coal piles. Having the washdown capability discussed and responsibilities clearly established before hot work started is an example of proactive safety planning.

Safety isn't always about stopping something that is wrong. Sometimes a good safety observation shows us what right looks like. Taking the time to communicate, assign responsibilities, and make sure everyone follows through on the plan helps the crew start the job with a common understanding of what is expected.

Hazards

- Hot work in an area with full coal piles
- Sparks and hot material associated with hot work
- Potential ignition of combustible material
- Need for washdown capability during the work
- Multiple groups involved in the work

Words of Wisdom

A strong hot-work plan starts before the first spark. Communicate the plan, clearly assign the responsibilities, and make sure everyone understands their part before the work begins.

Pause and Think

- Before hot work begins, have the people involved discussed the plan?
- Does everyone understand what they are responsible for?
- Have the controls needed for the work been identified before starting?
- When another group is involved, have responsibilities been clearly communicated?
- Are we following through on the responsibilities that were agreed upon during the pre-job discussion?

Closing Thought

Good safety doesn't always come from correcting a problem. Sometimes it comes from doing the planning and communication right before the problem ever has a chance to develop.

SHARP START

October 8 — Know the Capacity Before You Lift

I was tasked with unloading and installing a 5000 lb fan with a 10000 lb forklift. The fan was so big that it had to be 48" out on the forks. This reduces the lifting capacity to 5000 lbs.	**Contacted the rental company and retrieved a 12000 forklift to utilize for this job.**

Capacity Depends on More Than the Number on the Forklift

A 10,000-lb forklift may sound like it has plenty of capacity for a 5,000-lb load. But this job involved a 5,000-lb fan that had to be positioned 48 inches out on the forks because of its size. That changed the lifting capacity of the equipment and left the planned forklift at its limit for the load.

Instead of trying to make the 10,000-lb forklift work, the job was stopped and the rental company was contacted. A 12,000-lb forklift was brought in to handle the fan.

This is an important reminder that the capacity listed on a piece of equipment isn't always as simple as comparing two numbers. The way the load is positioned and the configuration of the equipment matter. When the load has to be extended farther out, we need to make sure the equipment is still capable of safely handling it in that configuration.

The important part of this observation is the decision to recognize the limitation before making the lift. The crew didn't wait until the forklift was unstable or the load was in the air to find out whether the equipment was adequate. They looked at the actual job, recognized that the size and position of the fan changed the situation, and got equipment with the appropriate capacity.

Hazards

- Exceeding the forklift's rated capacity
- Loss of forklift stability
- Load shifting or falling
- Equipment damage
- Serious injury to employees in the area
- Using equipment that is not adequate for the load and configuration

Words of Wisdom

Don't choose equipment based only on the weight of the load. Consider how the load must be positioned, verify the equipment's capacity for that configuration, and make sure the equipment is right for the job before the lift begins.

Pause and Think

- Do you know the actual weight of the load you're preparing to move?
- Does the position of the load change the equipment's lifting capacity?
- Have you checked the equipment's capacity for the way the load will actually be handled?
- What should you do if the equipment appears to be at or near its limit?
- Are you willing to stop and get different equipment when the planned equipment isn't adequate?

Closing Thought

The safest lift is planned before the load leaves the ground. Know the load, understand how its position affects capacity, and make sure the equipment is capable of doing the job safely.

SHARP START

October 9 — Tied Off, But to What?

Contractor was 12 feet off the ground and tied off to a 3 inch pipe hanger that was 1/2" all thread.	**Told his supervisor so he could get a better anchor point.**

Being Tied Off Is Only Part of the Protection

A contractor was working approximately 12 feet above the ground and was wearing fall protection. However, the employee was tied off to a 3-inch pipe hanger supported by 1/2-inch all-thread.

The concern was recognized and brought to the contractor's supervisor so a better anchor point could be identified before the work continued.

This observation is a good reminder that simply seeing a worker wearing a harness and connected to something doesn't tell us whether the entire fall protection setup is appropriate. The connection point matters. A tie off point needs to be suitable for its intended purpose not simply convenient, nearby, or something that appears sturdy.

Before connecting, take the time to identify where you are going to tie off and make sure the selected location is appropriate. If there is any uncertainty about an anchor point, don't guess based on its appearance. Stop and get the right person involved to determine a better location.

This observation also shows the value of looking beyond the obvious. Someone could have walked by, seen that the contractor was wearing a harness and tied off, and assumed everything was okay. Instead, the observer looked at what the worker was actually connected to, recognized the concern, and spoke up.

Hazards

- Fall from approximately 12 feet
- Unsuitable tie-off location
- Anchor point not adequate for the intended use
- Failure of the selected connection point during a fall
- Serious injury from a fall to a lower level
- Assuming that being connected automatically means the fall-protection setup is safe

Words of Wisdom

A harness and lanyard can only protect you as well as the point they're connected to. Don't tie off to something simply because it's convenient to make sure your anchor point is appropriate before trusting it with your life.

Pause and Think

- Before you tie off, do you know whether the selected anchor point is appropriate?
- Are you choosing an anchor because it is suitable, or simply because it is close?
- Do you look at what other employees are actually tied off to not just whether they're wearing fall protection?
- If you're unsure about an anchor point, do you know who to ask before continuing?
- Would you trust the selected anchor point to perform as intended if a fall actually occurred?

Closing Thought

Being tied off is not the finish line. Know what you're connected to, make sure it's appropriate for the job, and speak up when a tie-off point doesn't look right.

SHARP START

October 12 — Respect the Tension

16ga red oxide coil strap was broken, which holds enormous amounts of tension.	**Lifted the coil with the crane & properly disposed of the old band & put a new one & properly secured it.**

Don't Underestimate Stored Tension

A 16-gauge red oxide coil strap was found broken. While the strap itself may not look substantial, the observation points out an important detail: **the strap holds enormous amounts of tension.**

When a strap or band is under tension, a failure can release that stored energy suddenly. A broken or damaged strap should not be treated as something that can simply be handled or removed by hand without considering what could happen when the tension is released.

The crew controlled the situation by using the crane to lift the coil. The damaged band was properly disposed of, and a new band was installed and properly secured.

The important lesson is to recognize **stored energy that may not be obvious just by looking at the equipment**. When we see a damaged strap, cable, chain, or other component that has been holding a load or tension, we need to stop and think about what could happen when that control is removed or fails.

Before working around a tensioned component, understand what it is holding, how it could move, and how the energy will be controlled. **Don't put yourself in the path of something that could suddenly release.**

Hazards

- Stored tension in the coil strap
- Sudden release of stored energy
- Broken or failed strap
- Stuck-by hazard
- Unexpected movement of the coil
- Serious injury from released tension or shifting material

Words of Wisdom

Stored energy doesn't have to look dangerous to be dangerous. When a strap, chain, or other component is holding tension, respect what it is controlling and make sure the load is secured before you remove or replace it.

Pause and Think

- What energy is stored in the strap or band you're working around?
- What could happen if the strap fails or the remaining tension is released?
- Where would the strap or load move if something let go?
- Is the load properly supported before removing a damaged component?
- Are you positioned outside the potential line of fire?

Closing Thought

A small strap can control a tremendous amount of energy. Know what you're working around, control the load, and stay out of the path of anything that could suddenly let go.

SHARP START

October 13 — Stop When the Load Changes

Hauling steel to job site. Steel vibrating around and straps becoming loose.	**Stop and check load as needed and tighten straps.**

Learning: A Secure Load Can Become an Unsecure Load

When hauling steel, the load may shift or vibrate as the vehicle travels. In this observation, the steel was vibrating around and the straps were becoming loose. That change in the load condition was recognized and addressed rather than continuing to the job site.

The important lesson is that securing a load is not necessarily a one-time action. Straps that were tight when the load was first secured can loosen as the load moves. When that happens, the right response is to stop, check the load, and make the necessary adjustments before continuing.

Taking a few minutes to retighten the straps helps keep the steel controlled during the remainder of the trip and prevents a changing load from becoming a bigger problem.

Good load securement means paying attention to the load throughout the haul, not just when the straps are first installed.

Hazards

- Steel shifting or moving during transport
- Straps becoming loose
- Load movement caused by vibration
- Inadequate load securement
- Steel shifting or falling from the load

Words of Wisdom

A load that was secure when you started may not stay that way. When the load changes, stop and make it secure again before you move.

Pause and Think

- Did the load remain in the same position after we started moving?
- Are the straps still tight and properly securing the steel?
- What signs would tell me that the load is beginning to shift?
- If I notice a strap becoming loose, am I willing to stop and correct it?
- Before continuing, have I confirmed the load is secure?

Closing Thought

Don't wait until a load becomes a problem. If you see the steel moving or the straps loosening, stop and correct it.

SHARP START

October 14 — Turn It On Before You Start

Employee was welding aluminum steps and had a ventilator present at the work area. But the employee forgot to turn on the ventilator. Leaving them unprotected with hazardous fumes.	**The employee was alerted that their ventilator was not turned on. They proceeded to stop working to turn on the ventilator.**

Learning: Turn the Control On Before You Begin

Welding creates fumes that need to be controlled at the source. In this observation, the employee was welding aluminum steps and had a ventilator positioned at the work area. The equipment needed to provide ventilation was there, but it had not been turned on. That meant the employee was working without the protection the ventilator was intended to provide.

The condition was noticed and brought to the employee's attention. The employee responded appropriately by stopping the work and turning on the ventilator before continuing. This is an important part of the lesson: when a required control is not in place, stopping the job to correct it is the right action.

It is easy to look at a work area and see that the necessary equipment is present and assume the job is ready to go. But available and active are two different things. A ventilator sitting next to the work does not control fumes until it is operating.

This same thinking applies to many of the controls we use every day. Before starting a task, take a moment to verify that the controls you are relying on are actually in place and functioning. If something is missing, turned off, or not being used as intended, stop and correct it before continuing.

The few seconds spent checking a control before starting the job can prevent an exposure that lasts much longer.

Hazards

- Welding fumes
- Exposure to hazardous fumes when ventilation is not operating
- Starting work before required controls are active
- Relying on equipment that is present but not turned on
- Failing to verify controls before beginning the task.

Words of Wisdom

A control only provides protection when it is being used as intended. Don't assume the job is ready because the equipment is there. Verify that the control is active before you begin.

Pause and Think

- What hazards will this task create?
- What controls are required before I begin?
- Is the ventilation equipment positioned correctly and turned on?
- Have I actually verified that the control is working?
- If I discover a control is not in place, will I stop and correct it before continuing?

Closing Thought

Before the first spark, make sure the controls that protect you are ready to do their job.

SHARP START

October 15 — Don’t Assume the Material is Safe

Walls not labeled for asbestos	**Stopped work and found out if the walls were asbestos, they were**

Learning: Don't Assume the Material Is Safe

When work involves existing walls or other building materials, it may not always be obvious what is behind the surface or what the material contains. In this observation, the walls were **not labeled for asbestos**, creating uncertainty about what workers could encounter if work continued.

Instead of assuming the walls were safe to work on, the work was stopped and the condition was investigated. The investigation determined that the walls **did contain asbestos**. Stopping before disturbing the material prevented the crew from unknowingly continuing work on a material that required additional consideration.

This is an important example of **recognizing uncertainty as a reason to pause**. When information needed to safely perform a task is missing, don't fill in the blank with an assumption. Stop, ask questions, and find out what you are dealing with before proceeding.

Labels, documentation, and other information about existing materials are there to help us understand the work environment before we disturb it. If that information is missing, the safest choice is to **verify rather than assume**.

The observation also reinforces the value of Stop Work. The decision to pause the job created an opportunity to identify the material before the work continued.

Hazards

- Potential exposure to asbestos
- Disturbing unidentified building materials
- Missing or incomplete material identification
- Assuming an unknown material is safe
- Beginning work before confirming site conditions

Words of Wisdom

When you don't know what you're working with, don't guess. Stop, find the information you need, and make sure the material is understood before the work continues.

Pause and Think

- Do I know what materials I will be working around or disturbing?
- Is the material properly identified or labeled?
- What should I do when required information is missing?
- Am I making an assumption because I want to keep the job moving?
- What would cause me to stop and ask for additional information?

Closing Thought

Unknown doesn't mean safe. When something doesn't look right or the information isn't there, stop and find out before you disturb it.

SHARP START

October 16 — Secure It Before You Grind It

Observed an employee grinding plates at the back table in the shop. It did not appear as though the plates were being clamped down when being ground. This could lead to potential hand injury or struck by injury.	**The employee was done grinding by the time I reached him but when asked, he admitted that he had not been clamping the plates. I asked if he would from now on, to avoid injury, and he agreed to do so.**

Learning: Control the Work Before You Control the Tool

When grinding a plate, the focus can easily go to the grinder itself guard position, PPE, sparks, and where the wheel is contacting the material. But the setup of the material being ground is just as important.

In this observation, an employee was grinding plates at the back table without clamping the plates down. The work was already complete when the observer reached the employee, but the conversation confirmed that the plates had not been secured during grinding.

A plate that is not secured can move when the grinder makes contact with it. Even a small amount of movement can change the position of the workpiece, affect how the grinder contacts the material, or cause a person's hands to be closer to the moving tool or workpiece than intended. The observation specifically identified the potential for hand injury or struck-by injury.

The conversation afterward provided an opportunity to reinforce a simple step: secure the material before starting the work. Taking the extra time to clamp the plate helps keep the workpiece where it belongs and allows the employee to focus on controlling the grinder rather than trying to control the material at the same time.

Good preparation doesn't have to be complicated. Before putting a grinder into the material, look at the setup and ask: Is the piece secure? Can it move? Where will my hands be if it does?

A few seconds spent securing the work can help keep the tool, the material, and your hands under control throughout the task.

Hazards

- Unsecured material moving during grinding
- Hand injury
- Struck-by injury
- Loss of control of the workpiece
- Hands positioned near moving or shifting material

Words of Wisdom

The grinder isn't the only thing you need to control. Secure the material first so you can keep your attention on controlling the tool and completing the job safely.

Pause and Think

- Is the material securely clamped before I begin?
- Could the piece move when the grinder contacts it?
- Where will my hands be if the material shifts?
- Am I trying to hold a workpiece that should be secured?
- What can I do before starting to make the job easier to control?

Closing Thought

Secure the work before you start the work. When the material is controlled, you have a better chance of keeping the tool and your hands under control.

SHARP START

October 19 — Unplug Before You Reach In

Change blade on band saw without unplugging the band saw	**Stop action instructed employees to unplug when change blade or any work done around blade or discs and bits.**

Learning: Remove the Energy Before the Contact

Changing a blade or working around cutting tools requires more than simply making sure the machine isn't currently running. The energy source needs to be controlled before hands or tools are placed near the blade, disc, or bit.

In this observation, a blade was being changed on a band saw without unplugging the saw. The work was stopped and the employee was instructed to unplug the equipment before changing the blade or performing work around blades, discs, and bits.

The important lesson is to recognize that "not running" does not necessarily mean "safe to reach into." A machine can have stored or available energy that could allow the cutting component to move unexpectedly if the equipment is activated.

Before changing a blade or performing work around a cutting component, stop and think about what could cause that component to move. Then remove or isolate the energy source according to the required procedure.

This expectation extends beyond the band saw. Whenever you're working around a blade, disc, bit, or other moving component, don't rely on the machine simply being switched off. Make sure the energy is controlled before putting yourself in a position where unexpected movement could cause an injury.

Taking the extra step to unplug the equipment is a small part of the job, but it creates an important separation between you and the energy that can move the tool.

Hazards

- Unexpected movement of the band saw blade
- Contact with a cutting blade
- Hand or finger injury
- Equipment being energized while work is being performed
- Unexpected movement of blades, discs or bits.

Words of Wisdom

Don't put your hands where energy can reach them. Before changing a blade or working around a cutting component, remove the energy that could make it move.

Pause and Think

- Is the equipment completely de-energized before I begin?
- Could the blade, disc, or bit move unexpectedly?
- Have I unplugged the equipment before working around the cutting component?
- Am I relying only on the power switch being off?
- What energy source needs to be controlled before I put my hands in the work area?

Closing Thought

Before you reach toward a blade, make sure you've removed what can make it move. Unplug first. Then work.

SHARP START

October 20 — Rig It Right Before You Lift

Another contractor was wanting our crew to fly a piece of conduit for them using a half hitch. They did not have it properly choked	**The rigging was removed and a qualified rigger came and choked the strap properly then work resumed.**

Learning: The Rigging Has to Match the Lift

Rigging is one of the most important parts of any lift because the rigging is what connects the load to the lifting equipment. In this observation, another contractor wanted our crew to fly a piece of conduit using a half hitch, but the strap had not been properly choked around the conduit.

The crew did not simply continue with the lift. The rigging was removed, and a qualified rigger was brought in to properly choke the strap. Once the rigging was corrected, the work resumed.

This is an important reminder that **getting the load connected to the lifting equipment is not the same as having the load properly rigged.** The way the sling or strap is positioned and secured needs to provide control of the load throughout the lift.

A good lift starts with looking at the load and asking how it needs to be rigged before anything comes off the ground. If the rigging doesn't look right, or there is uncertainty about how the load should be secured, stop and get the right person involved.

This observation also reinforces the importance of respecting the role of a qualified rigger. Rather than trying to make a questionable setup work, the crew brought in someone qualified to correct the rigging. **The lift was able to continue because the problem was addressed before the load was lifted.**

Taking the time to rig the load correctly is part of the lift not something to figure out after the load is already in the air.

Hazards

- Improperly choked rigging
- Load movement during lifting
- Rigging slipping or losing control of the conduit
- Dropped or uncontrolled load
- Struck by exposure around a lifted load

Words of Wisdom

A lift is only as controlled as the connection between the load and the lifting equipment. If the rigging isn't right, stop and get it right before the load leaves the ground.

Pause and Think

- Is the load properly rigged for the way we are going to lift it?
- Is the strap or sling positioned and secured correctly?
- Could the rigging slip or allow the load to move?
- Do I have the knowledge and qualification needed to make this rigging decision?
- If something doesn't look right, am I willing to stop the lift and get help?

Closing Thought

Don't make the lift and hope the rigging holds. Take the time to rig it correctly before the load ever leaves the ground.

SHARP START

October 21 - When Conditions Change, Stop

Heavy wind and rainfall collapsed the tent on top of the platform and gathered a huge amount of rainwater which was leaking through as we were welding, we stopped work.	**and removed the tent and disposed of it properly**

Learning: Don't Work Through Changing Conditions

Hot work requires us to pay attention not only to the task itself, but also to the conditions around the work area. Weather can change those conditions quickly, especially when work is being performed on a platform or under a temporary shelter.

In this observation, heavy wind and rainfall caused the tent on top of the platform to collapse. A large amount of rainwater also gathered and began leaking through while welding was taking place. At that point, the work environment had changed significantly from the conditions that existed when the job began.

The crew recognized the change and stopped the welding work rather than trying to work through the conditions. The tent was then removed and properly disposed of.

This is an important Human Performance lesson: the plan that was safe a few minutes ago may not be safe after conditions change. Wind, rain, water accumulation, damaged temporary structures, or other changes can introduce new hazards that weren't present when the job started.

Stopping doesn't mean the job failed. It means the crew recognized that the conditions had changed and made the decision to address the new condition before continuing.

Before and during hot work, take a moment to look beyond the immediate task. Ask yourself: What has changed? Is the work area still suitable for the job we're doing?

If conditions change enough to affect the work, stop and reassess.

Hazards

- Heavy wind around the work area
- Rainwater accumulating on the platform
- Water leaking into the welding area
- Collapsed or damaged temporary shelter
- Changing conditions during hot work

Words of Wisdom

The work environment can change while the job is underway. When conditions change, don't force the original plan to stop working, reassess, and make the area safe before continuing.

Pause and Think

- What conditions could change while I am working?
- Is the work area still suitable for the task?
- Has weather affected my work area or equipment?
- What should I do if the conditions change during the job?
- Am I willing to stop when the original plan no longer fits the conditions?

Closing Thought

A safe job requires more than a good plan it requires us to recognize when conditions change and adjust before continuing.

SHARP START

October 22 — Don't Just Point It Out, Verify It

While performing a lockout verification with customer. the customers employee did not do a good job at explaining what was locked out. He basically walked by valves with locks and pointed at them.	**When he was done, I explained to him I had no idea what was actually locked out and that he needed to do a better job. Walk the lockout like a checklist and ensure everyone understands. I then walked the lockout down by myself and checked each valve was the correct one to be locked out before signing the sheet.**

Learning: Everyone Needs to Understand the Lockout

A LOTO verification is more than walking through an area and looking at locks. The purpose of the walkthrough is to verify that the correct energy sources have been identified and isolated and that everyone involved understands what has been locked out.

During this observation, the customers employee walked by the valves and pointed at the locks but did not explain what was actually locked out. From the observer's perspective, simply pointing at the locks did not provide enough information to understand what each lock represented.

The observer addressed the concern and explained that the lockout needed to be walked like a checklist, with the specific isolation points identified and understood. The observer then walked the lockout independently and checked each valve to make sure it was the correct valve to be locked out before signing the sheet.

This is an important distinction: seeing a lock is not the same as verifying an isolation. A good walkthrough should allow the person performing the verification to understand what is locked out, why it is locked out, and that the correct isolation points have been identified.

Taking the time to explain the lockout also creates an opportunity for questions. If someone cannot clearly explain what they are showing you, that is a reason to slow down and verify rather than simply continuing through the checklist.

A thorough LOTO verification should leave everyone with the same understanding of the isolation not just the person who performed the lockout.

Hazards

- Incorrect valve identified during LOTO
- Incomplete understanding of energy isolation
- Failure to identify the correct isolation points.
- Relying on visual confirmation of locks alone
- Signing a verification without fully understanding the lockout.

Words of Wisdom

A lock tells you something has been secured. Verification tells you whether the right thing has been secured. Walk it like a checklist and make sure everyone understands what is locked out.

Pause and Think

- Can I clearly explain what has been locked out?
- Do I know what each lock is securing?
- Have we verified that each isolation point is the correct one?
- Would another person understand the lockout from my explanation?
- Am I comfortable signing the verification because I actually understand the isolation?

Closing Thought

Don't just look for locks verify the isolation. If everyone can't clearly explain what is locked out, slow down and walk it through again.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something

SHARP START

October 23 — Tied Off Doesn't Mean Out of Danger

Employee was tied off but there was potential for swing in the event of a fall. Could result in an injury.	**Stopped worker and found a better tie off point.**

Learning: Your Tie-Off Point Matters

Fall protection does more than keep a worker connected it needs to help keep the worker protected if a fall actually occurs. In this observation, the employee was tied off, but the location of the tie-off point created the potential for a swing in the event of a fall.

A worker can be properly wearing fall protection and still have another hazard to consider. If the anchor point is positioned to the side rather than appropriately above or near the work area, a fall can create a swing hazard. The worker may move sideways and potentially strike a structure or other object.

The concern was identified before a fall occurred. The worker was stopped, and a better tie-off point was found. This is exactly the kind of correction we want to make before the hazard has an opportunity to become an incident.

Fall protection planning should include more than asking, *"Am I tied off?"* We also need to ask, *"Where am I tied off, and what happens if I fall from here?"* Look at the location of the anchor, the worker's position, and the area around the potential fall path.

Taking a few extra moments to evaluate the tie-off point can help prevent a fall from turning into a swing into a nearby structure or object.

Hazards

- Swing hazard during a fall
- Striking a structure or object during a fall
- Tie-off point positioned away from the work area
- Fall protection setup that doesn't account for the fall path
- Serious injury from a fall or swing

Words of Wisdom

Being tied off is only part of fall protection. Look at where you're connected and what your fall path will look like before you begin the work.

Pause and Think

- Where is my tie-off point in relation to where I'm working?
- If I fell from here, where would I travel?
- Could I swing into a structure or other object?
- Is there a better tie-off point available?
- Have I considered the entire fall path not just whether I'm connected?

Closing Thought

Don't just ask if you're tied off. Ask where you'll go if you fall. The right tie-off point can make all the difference.

SHARP START

October 26 — Control the Path of the Load

Bringing a load of trash from the roof down on a pallet. A guy almost walks under load as crane operator blows the horn there was no barricade	**Should've had a barricade from the building to the landing zone**

Learning: Don't Rely on a Horn to Control a Suspended Load

When a crane is moving a load, controlling the area around the load is just as important as controlling the load itself. In this observation, a pallet of trash was being lowered from the roof. The crane operator sounded the horn, but a person still came close to walking underneath the suspended load.

The issue wasn't that the operator failed to give a warning. The observation specifically identified that there was no barricade between the building and the landing zone. Without a physical boundary, someone could enter the travel or landing area without realizing a load was being moved overhead.

A horn can provide an important warning, but it shouldn't be the only thing keeping people out of the area. A barricade creates a clear visual and physical indication that the area is controlled and that people should stay out.

Before moving a suspended load, look at the entire path the load will travel, not just the point where it will eventually land. Consider where people could enter the area and establish the necessary barricades before the lift begins.

The goal is to keep people out of the load's path before they have an opportunity to walk into it.

Hazards

- Suspended load
- Person entering the load path
- Struck by hazard
- Lack of barricade around the controlled area
- Relying on a warning signal without controlling access

Words of Wisdom

A horn warns people that a load is moving. A barricade helps keep them out of its path. Control the area before the load starts moving.

Pause and Think

- What area will the load travel through?
- Could someone enter that area without realizing a lift is taking place?
- Where should the barricade be placed?
- Is a warning signal enough to control access to the load path?
- Before lifting, have we established and communicated the controlled area?

Closing Thought

Don't wait for someone to get too close to a suspended load. Establish the boundary first, then move the load.

SHARP START

October 27 - Speak Up Before Someone Gets Hurt

EE was using a grinder to clean up frame of door. Had a face shield on but didn't have it down. Also holding the grinder so he was shooting sparks directly at his face.	**Stopped him and told him the face shield will work a lot better if you put it down. Also explained to him that if he was to turn the grinder so he was shooting sparks down there would be less risk of getting debris in his eyes. Don't ever assume that the people you're working around understand how to do things correctly, you can definitely keep someone from injuring themselves by speaking up!**

Learning: The Right PPE and the Right Technique Work Together

Grinding creates sparks and debris that can become an eye and face hazard. In this observation, the employee had a face shield available and was wearing it, but the shield was not lowered while he was grinding. At the same time, the grinder was positioned so that sparks were being directed directly toward his face.

The observation is a good reminder that having the right PPE isn't the same as using it effectively. The face shield can only provide the intended protection when it is in the proper position. How we hold and position the grinder also matters because we can often reduce the amount of debris and sparks traveling toward us by controlling their direction.

The employee was stopped and the concern was addressed before an injury occurred. He was reminded to put the face shield down and shown how changing the direction of the grinder could reduce the risk of debris reaching his eyes.

There is another important lesson in this observation: don't assume the people working around you see the same hazard you see. The person performing the task may be focused on getting the work completed and may not recognize that a small adjustment could make the job safer.

Speaking up doesn't have to be complicated or confrontational. A simple reminder can give someone an opportunity to correct the way they are performing a task before they get hurt.

We all have a role in looking out for the people working around us. If you see something that could cause an injury, say something.

Hazards

- Sparks and debris directed toward the face
- Face shield not positioned for use
- Grinding debris entering the eyes
- Incorrect direction of sparks and debris
- Failing to speak up when an unsafe condition is observed

Words of Wisdom

The best safety conversations happen before the injury. If you see someone exposed to a hazard, don't assume they have it under control speak up and help them see what you see.

Pause and Think

- Is my face and eye protection positioned correctly for the task?
- Where are sparks and debris going?
- Can I position the tool to direct debris away from myself and others?
- If I see someone working in a way that could cause an injury, will I speak up?
- Am I willing to accept a safety reminder from someone working around me?

Closing Thought

Looking out for each other isn't just about noticing hazards. It's about having the courage to speak up before a hazard becomes an injury.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something

SHARP START

October 28 — Don't Let Dust Build Up

Combustible dust 1in deep in all belt lines	Needs cleaned

Learning: Accumulation Is a Hazard We Can See

Combustible dust can become a serious concern when it is allowed to accumulate in the work environment. In this observation, approximately **one inch of combustible dust was found throughout the belt lines**. That is a condition that needs to be recognized and addressed rather than allowed to continue building.

The important lesson is that housekeeping is more than keeping an area looking clean. When the material being handled can create combustible dust, **dust accumulation itself needs to be treated as a condition that requires attention**.

The belt lines are an area where dust can collect over time, which makes it important to pay attention to areas that may not receive the same attention as normal walking and working surfaces. An area can look acceptable from a distance while dust continues to accumulate in places around equipment and conveyor systems.

This is also an important connection to our hot work awareness. **Combustible material and ignition sources do not belong together.** Keeping dust accumulation under control helps reduce the amount of combustible material present in the work environment.

The observation identified the condition so it could be addressed. The takeaway is simple: don't wait for an accumulation to become someone else's problem. If you see combustible dust building up, **say something and make sure it gets addressed.**

Good housekeeping is an active part of preventing hazards not simply something we do when the job is finished.

Hazards

- Combustible dust accumulation
- Dust collecting around belt lines and equipment
- Increased combustible material in the work area
- Ignition potential when combustible material is present
- Allowing dust accumulation to continue

Words of Wisdom

Housekeeping is part of hazard control. When combustible dust starts to accumulate, don't look past it, recognize it, report it, and get it cleaned up.

Pause and Think

- Where does dust accumulate around the equipment I work around?
- Am I looking beyond the areas that are easy to see?
- What could happen if combustible dust continues to build up?
- If I notice an accumulation, who needs to know?
- Are we keeping combustible material under control before it becomes a larger concern?

Closing Thought

Don't wait for dust to become a bigger problem. See the accumulation, say something, and get it addressed.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something

SHARP START

October 29 — Clear Communication Matters

While giving radio crane signals and a load on a crane. Multiple people were talking around me and inhibiting my ability to focus on crane commands I dogged everything and respectfully communicated to the observers that they were inhibiting my ability to communicate with the crane.	**Respectfully communicated what was expected**

Learning: Protect the Communication

When a crane is moving a load, the person communicating with the crane operator needs to be able to focus on the signals and commands being given. Clear communication is an important part of coordinating the movement of the load.

In this observation, multiple people were talking around the person giving the crane signals. The conversations were interfering with his ability to focus on the crane commands. Rather than trying to work through the distraction, he **dogged everything** and respectfully communicated to the observers that their conversations were inhibiting his ability to communicate with the crane.

That was an important decision. He recognized that the distraction could affect his ability to perform his role effectively and took action to correct the situation.

This is a good reminder that **communication isn't just about what we say it's also about creating an environment where important communication can be heard and understood.** During critical work, unnecessary conversations and distractions can make it harder for the people performing the task to maintain their focus.

It also takes awareness and confidence to speak up when something around you is interfering with your ability to do the job safely. The employee didn't ignore the distraction or respond disrespectfully. He stopped the activity and clearly explained what was needed.

Everyone around a critical task has a responsibility to recognize when their actions may be creating a distraction. Sometimes the safest thing we can do is **stop talking, give the person doing the job our attention, and let them focus.**

Hazards

- Distractions during crane operations
- Multiple people talking during critical communication
- Inability to clearly hear and communicate crane commands
- Loss of focus while directing a load
- Misunderstanding of crane signals or commands

Words of Wisdom

Critical communication deserves our full attention. When someone is directing a crane, give them the space and quiet they need to communicate clearly.

Pause and Think

- Who needs to be communicating during this task?
- Could my conversation or actions distract someone performing a critical role?
- Can the signalman clearly hear and communicate with the crane operator?
- If a distraction is affecting my ability to do the job, will I speak up?
- Am I helping create an environment where important communication can be heard?

Closing Thought

When clear communication matters, protect it. Give the person doing the job the focus and space they need to do it safely.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something

SHARP START

October 30 — Stop When You See the Fumes

Workers were welding aluminum trying to set their machine on the proper heat. Unsafe fumes were coming off the metal, which could cause respiratory problems.	**The employees were asked to pause their work. Then they proceeded to get a fumes extractor to were they're work is taking places.**

Learning: Don't Work Through an Exposure

Welding can produce fumes, and the work environment can change as the welding process and conditions change. In this observation, employees were welding aluminum while working to determine the proper heat setting for the machine. During the work, fumes were coming off the metal that could create a respiratory exposure.

Instead of continuing to work through the fumes, the employees were asked to **pause the work**. They then obtained a fume extractor and brought it to the location where they were working.

This is a good example of recognizing an exposure and taking action before continuing the task. The employees didn't have to wait for someone to become uncomfortable or for the work to be completed before addressing the fumes. The work was paused, the appropriate control was obtained, and the employees could then continue with ventilation in place.

It's also a reminder that the conditions we start a job with may not be the conditions we have a few minutes later. If something changes and we begin seeing fumes or another exposure that wasn't adequately controlled, **that's a reason to stop and reassess the work.**

The goal isn't to simply finish the task. The goal is to recognize when a control is needed and put that control in place before continuing.

Hazards

- Welding fumes
- Respiratory exposure
- Fumes accumulating around the work area
- Continuing work while exposure is present
- Inadequate ventilation for the task

Words of Wisdom

Don't get used to working through exposure. If you see fumes that aren't being adequately controlled, pause the work, address the condition, and then continue.

Pause and Think

- What fumes or exposures could this task create?
- Can I see or otherwise recognize an exposure developing?
- Is the ventilation adequate for the work I'm doing?
- What should I do if the conditions change while I'm working?
- Am I willing to pause the job until the right control is in place?

Closing Thought

You don't have to finish the job before you address an exposure. Stop, control the condition, and then get back to work.