



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.