



# SHARP START



## March 19 — Yellow Tag Means Stop

When doing a lockout, I noticed several of the valves in the lockout are not labeled. Valves should be labeled so everyone knows what they are locking out.

Report to customer to have labels made and installed.

While performing a lockout, several valves required for isolation were not labeled. The system could still be worked on. The handles could still be turned. But clarity was missing.

If you can't identify it, you can't isolate it. Lockout requires certainty not memory.

Lockout depends on certainty. Each valve must be clearly identified so the correct system is isolated. When valves are unlabeled, workers are forced to rely on memory, assumption, or someone else's explanation. That removes precision from a process designed to eliminate hazardous energy.

Energy does not forgive confusion. If the wrong valve is closed or the correct one is left open pressure, flow, or stored energy may remain in the system. And that exposure is often discovered only when a line is opened or equipment is accessed.

This wasn't about someone skipping steps. It was about missing clarity in a process that requires it.

When identification is uncertain, isolation is uncertain.

### Hazards

- Incomplete isolation
- Unexpected release of stored energy
- Pressurized fluid discharge
- Chemical exposure
- Equipment movement during maintenance
- Serious injury during servicing

### Stats

- Failure to control hazardous energy remains a leading cause of serious workplace injury.
- Lockout/tagout violations consistently rank among the most cited OSHA standards.
- Many serious incidents occur during maintenance and servicing activities.
- Incomplete or incorrect isolation is a frequent contributing factor in energy release events.

### Humans at Work

When information is unclear, the brain does not like the gap. So it fills it in. We assume. We rely on memory. We trust what we think we know. That works most of the time — until it doesn't. The problem is, high risk work does not tolerate guesswork. When clarity is missing and we move forward anyway, we are no longer working with certainty. We are working with assumption. And assumption is not a control.

Experience is valuable, but it should never replace confirmation. When something is not clearly identified, labeled, or verified, that is the moment to slow down not just push through.

### Pause and Think

- What is unclear right now?
- How are you verifying instead of guessing?
- If your assumption is wrong, what is the worst outcome?