SHARP START

August 25 — Don't Just Lock It...Verify It

A valve was locked in the open position, the valve was supposed to be locked in the closed position.	**Operations and management was notified, the valve was unlocked and closed then re locked.**

A lock doesn't make equipment safe...

...it only secures the position it's in.

During a routine work observation, a valve was found locked in the open position when it should have been locked in the closed position to safely isolate the system. Although a lock was installed, the valve was not in the position needed to control the hazardous energy.

It's easy to see a lock and assume everything has been done correctly. However, a lock is only one part of the lockout/tagout process. Before installing a lock, the equipment or valve must first be placed in the correct position to isolate the energy source. Taking a moment to verify the valve's position before locking it can prevent unexpected energy releases and protect everyone working on the system.

This observation is a reminder that effective lockout/tagout isn't measured by the number of locks installed—it's measured by whether hazardous energy has truly been controlled. Slowing down to verify the correct valve position, checking isolation points, and confirming zero energy before work begins are the steps that make the process effective.

Hazards

- Incomplete lockout/tagout
- Unexpected release of hazardous energy
- Failure to isolate equipment
- Line of fire hazards
- Equipment damage
- Serious injury during maintenance

Words of Wisdom

A lock secures the equipment but only verification confirms it's safe.

Pause and Think

- Before locking a valve, how do you verify it's in the correct position?
- Do you rely on seeing a lock, or do you confirm the system has actually been isolated?
- What could happen if a valve is locked in the wrong position?
- How can coworkers help verify critical isolation points before work begins?
- What steps do you take to confirm hazardous energy has been eliminated before starting work?

Closing Thought

Lockout/tagout is more than placing a lock on equipment—it's making sure the equipment is in a safe condition before the lock is ever applied. A few extra seconds spent verifying valve position can prevent an incident that no one saw coming.