



# Click, print technology streamlines LOTO processes

*Application Factory*

In the previous two lockout tagout (LOTO) articles published in BIC Magazine, we've outlined how OSHA LOTO regulations including documentation, training and review, can be so onerous that one could spend a few hours a day every day doing some task related to LOTO. However, and as a result of the OSHA standards, the industry is adopting technology to increase efficiencies, lower LOTO costs and increase safety. Read here how the application of well-thought out technology can streamline your LOTO processes while also benefitting your bottom line.

Labor represents one of your most substantial expenses so anytime you can reduce clerical processes fulfilled by high-dollar people you do it, right? An automated system that prints tags not only removes the labor of handwritten tags but given the proper controls can also mean LOTO can be accomplished by less senior, less costly people. We all know a common adverse side effect of the labor intensive nature of LOTO is that highly paid operators spend a great deal of time doing the clerical task of handwriting

tags. When energy isolation lists are organized in a hierarchical database with the input of senior people, even a novice can go and produce the tags in a "click and print" or automated system.

The key to reducing labor and automating LOTO is contingent on a database-driven system. Key points of setting up a database are the accuracy of isolation points and completeness of ancillary information like gasket and blind types as well as procedural information like order in which isolation points are locked and tagged out according to standard operating procedure. This all dictates your LOTO process. When information is stored in a Word document or even a spreadsheet versus a database, it is much more difficult to search and review information and laborious to manage and change.

Therefore the key to implementing an automated LOTO system is to create a database of your isolation points. This database should: 1) Be set up by the people dealing with the equipment every day, like senior operators, 2) Be reviewed by multiple parties and really everyone involved in the

LOTO processes — operators, maintenance and supervisors, and 3) Be reviewed regularly and on a schedule.

Effectively your database of isolation points is a living document that not only requires review for ongoing safety of employees but per OSHA regulations must be reviewed no less frequently than annually.

The industry standard employs tags that are insufficiently durable requiring costly brass grommets or pieces of leather in order to add strength to the tag. Additionally, weather, wind and sun render these tags illegible and in violation of OSHA. So to combat the elements, some organizations use hard plastic tags, which are even more expensive. These tag types are costly and can't be reused. Therefore proper tag choice is imperative. By selecting the right materials that are chemical and sun resistant as well as tear resistant to alleviate the need for all the back-up strengthening devices, cost is lowered. There are tags that exceed the 50-foot pound pull requirement that OSHA dictates for cable ties. These tags are also

ultraviolet, chemical and heat resistant and absolutely waterproof. In large quantities these tags typically cost 40-60 percent less than the grommet, leather or plastic enhanced tags.

Potentially, OSHA violations resulting from improper LOTO, or worse, safety incidents, injury to or death of an employee can be your biggest expense. If a LOTO system is automated, powered by a database for click and print execution instead of handwritten processes and utilizes durable tags that meet OSHA standards even for long-term tagging, the opportunity for human error and material failure is minimized, thus reducing your expense and liability.

Comprehensive applications provide turnkey processes that support all activities of tagging, initial data collection, reporting, review and day to-day tagging activities, which is why the industry is moving from handwritten, time-consuming and costly processes to click and print.

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