

Toolbox Talks 2

039: Unsafe Acts: Operational Sites

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Think about work you've done on sites with existing operations and what the safety implications were.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Most injuries occur not due to unsafe conditions, but due to unsafe acts. This Safety Talk addresses unsafe acts on jobs where the site is operational.

Discussion notes:

Background

On new sites with no owner yet operating anything, equipment is normally de-energized until acceptance testing. This situation allows you to operate many breakers and controls without disrupting a process or endangering people. On an operational site, where you may be adding a production unit or doing upgrade work, things are very different.

Some unsafe acts on operational sites

- Being in an area not related to your work. This is more of a problem on operating sites than green sites. An industrial accident can't happen to you if you're not there.
- Operating any controls for which you are not specifically authorized. You can easily prevent many dangers by coordinating work in operating areas with the operations supervisor. Don't assume you have authorization; ask for it.
- Opening containers or handling materials not specifically associated with your job. Owners may place containers or materials in the construction area, even though doing so is generally ill-advised. If your crew didn't put it there, leave it alone and report its presence to your foreman (who can ask for it to be removed).
- Conducting equipment tests without operator coordination. Review tests with the operations supervisor or designee before conducting them.
- Conducting lockout/tagout without permission from the owner's operations supervisor or designee. The site lockout/tagout program *should* require a pre-lockout review with operations personnel.
- Working under someone else's lock and tag. When the other crew notifies the operators they are done, the protection will be removed. Put your own in place so you are protected.
- Removing a lock or tag operations added to your lock and tag. If operations disables equipment, don't second-guess them and energize it even if you "know" it's safe to do so.
- Leaving your lock or tag on at the end of your shift. This can tempt operators to cut the lock. They may subsequently energize a circuit that isn't safe to energize. Restore everything to a safe condition and remove your lock and tag before leaving.
- Removing grounds, bonds, or neutrals without a bypass. Your work may require temporarily breaking an existing ground, bond, or neutral connection for operating equipment. Ensure you provide an alternate path before doing so.

Review and discussion

1. What are some obvious differences between new sites and sites with existing operations? What are some not so obvious differences?
2. You could save time by walking through a particular area. But, it con-

tains several vats of acid. What's the best way to protect yourself from the acid? *[Note to presenter: Walk around that area. There's no reason to be there.]*

3. You need to get some materials onto a mezzanine. Fortunately, there's a hoist right there. Before you use the hoist, what should you do? *[Note to presenter: Never operate equipment that isn't yours without permission. It might seem silly to ask permission to operate a simple hoist. But there may be issues with that hoist that you're not aware of. Also, there's the issue of general courtesy—simply asking can prevent misunderstandings with the owner or customer.]*

4. What should you do if you come into work and find materials or containers that weren't there yesterday and don't know what they are? *[Note to presenter: Contact your foreman immediately. If you can work without disturbing these items, do so. If they present a stop work situation, use your best judgment in regard to moving them out of the way.]*

5. If you need to conduct equipment tests, from what group should you obtain permission first? In what situations might you already have permission? *[Note to presenter: This sometimes calls for judgment. For example, if you are performing terminations in a cabinet and want to do point-to-point verification, there is no need to ask permission. If you are installing new cables and want to do insulation resistance testing, you don't need permission—the fact you are installing the cable gives you that permission. But in many other instances, the permission is not inherent in the task.]*

6. You've been using some solvent and now need a container for the waste solvent. Along one wall, you see a stack of what appear to be empty paint cans. Should you open these to see what's inside? Why or why not?

7. A coworker suggests the two of you take a break and walk over to see the stamping and welding operation at the other end of the site. Why is this a problem? *[Note to presenter: It may be possible to arrange with the operations supervisor a short tour. But owners do not want non-employees just wandering around their operations. If you are interested in seeing the operation, ask your foreman to try to arrange a short tour.]*

8. You have completed work that required lockout/tagout. But when you go to open the breaker, you find a hasp with an operator's tag attached to your lock. Before you remove your lock, what should you do? *[Note to presenter: A correct procedure would require the operators to install a hasp, then have you move your lock onto it before they attach their lock. But sometimes conditions don't allow this or the owner's procedures are amiss. Never disregard a tag. Don't remove your lock until you find out what the operators want to do.]*

9. To provide power to the 277V lights in the new addition to the warehouse, you need to temporarily open the existing neutral connection at the panel. What should you do about the existing 277V lights, before opening that connection?

10. If an operator refuses to help you and this stops work, what should you do?

Participant's Signature and Date
