

Electrical isolation: off does not mean safe

Talk 01 of 52 | Week 1 | Electrical

Leader: adapt this talk to today's electrical work and site procedures. See the educational-use and liability notice on page 2.

START THE CONVERSATION

A crew is asked to work in equipment after someone says the breaker is off. Before anyone begins, establish who controls the work and who is authorized to verify the electrical condition.

KEY TALKING POINTS

1. Follow the employer's energy-control procedure for the equipment and task. Identify all sources, including possible backfeed and stored energy. A control switch is not an energy-isolating device.
2. Only appropriately trained and authorized personnel perform isolation and testing. A qualified person must verify the deenergized condition using suitable test equipment under the applicable procedure.
3. Respect locks, tags, barriers, and the handover process. Do not remove another worker's protection or reenergize equipment on an informal request.
4. If the equipment, scope, or personnel change, pause and review the plan before continuing. This briefing does not authorize energized work.
5. Electrical job example: a lighting replacement involves normal power and a separate emergency supply. Before the crew opens the equipment, have the responsible person explain the work boundary and how each source is addressed. A familiar panel label is a starting point for investigation, not proof that the equipment is safe.
6. Plan the handoff between crews. Identify who communicates with the building operator, who maintains the work restrictions, and who receives notice if the scope changes. If a second electrician joins the task, pause for the required briefing instead of relying on a message passed through another worker.
7. Practice the decision, not a live demonstration: ask the crew what they would do if a customer requests that one circuit remain operating. The answer should be to stop and return the decision to the responsible qualified person. Schedule pressure must not become an informal change to the approved work method.

ASK THE CREW

1. Who controls isolation for today's task?
2. How will changes and handovers be communicated?

BEFORE WORK STARTS

Identify the responsible supervisor and the applicable energy-control procedure before assigning work.

OSHA SOURCES / FURTHER READING

OSHA 1926.417: Construction lockout and tagging

OSHA 1910.333: General-industry electrical work practices

Attendance & action record

Electrical isolation: off does not mean safe

Date: _____ Leader: _____

Company / jobsite: _____

Site hazards and controls discussed:

Follow-up action / responsible person / due date:

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Participant name	Signature / acknowledgment

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