

# HAZARD ALERT

## Conveyor lockout failure leads to fatal injury

Inadequate lockout is a leading health and safety risk in sawmills, with failure to follow proper procedures often resulting in severe injury or death.

### What happened?

A millwright was fatally injured by a conveyor while working at a sawmill in Arkansas. After completing maintenance tasks in the log deck area, the worker began mechanically cleaning the log loader clean-up conveyor. During the task, the conveyor cycled, and the equipment had not been locked out.

### Why did it happen?

Lockout is a safety procedure used by industry to make sure dangerous machines are properly shut off and cannot be restarted during maintenance or repair. The failure to lockout equipment properly was the major contributing factor in the fatality.

According to Workplace Safety and Insurance Board data, injuries involving guarding and lockout rank among the top four causes of injuries in the pulp and paper industry. Research has shown the causes of inadequate or improper lockout of machines include: a lack of worker training and experience, lack of policy and procedures, poor safety culture, stress, and fatigue.

### How to reduce the risk

Maintenance work must only be performed when the equipment is shut down and locked out.

Workplaces should immediately focus on:

- Lockout training - Trainer competency, evaluation, site-specific scenarios, knowledge transfer



Pulp and paper operations rely on conveyors to move raw materials and finished products efficiently.

- Health promotion - Address fatigue, mental health, substance use
- Lockout policy - Current and accurate procedures, enforcement, communication, annual review
- Engineered solutions - Energy controls, artificial intelligence solutions

For more information on preventing injuries from hazardous equipment, [contact your local health and safety specialist.](#)

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## Key controls to manage risk from stationary equipment

Conveyors are essential in pulp and paper mills, but unsafe work practices can lead to serious injuries or fatalities. Effective controls, training, and safeguards are critical.

### Training and competency

- Provide hands-on, job-specific training with annual refreshers.
- Validate skills - workers must safely demonstrate tasks.
- Maintain a training matrix, records, and refreshers to keep programs effective and up to date.
- Incorporate classroom, hands-on, and interactive technology-based learning.
- Use mentoring, onboarding, and safety talks to reinforce procedures.

### Lockout and guarding

- Always lock out before maintenance, clean-up, or repairs.
- Post machine-specific lockout placards and procedures.
- Audit lockout compliance and update procedures regularly.
- Keep guarding inventoried, inspected, and in place.
- Incorporate new technologies: interlocks, light curtains, cameras, and wearable monitoring tools.

### Culture and communication

- Leadership must “walk the talk” and enforce safe practices.
- Hold toolbox talks and shift handover safety discussions.
- Recognize safe behaviours and stop unsafe practices immediately.

### Equipment and environment

- Keep work areas clean and free of congestion.
- Audit new and existing equipment for safe layout and guarding.
- Use technology where possible (interlocks, light curtains, cameras).

### Program and process controls

- Establish hazard reporting and follow-up systems.
- Engage JHSC in audits, inspections, and safety reviews.
- Review policies and procedures annually and communicate updates.