

# meatballs

“You get no bread with one meatball.”  
Depression era folk song

# 7

March 2004

PLEASE PASS THIS ON

Meatballs is put out in the belief that a strong union at SHAP depends on an informed and involved membership. Meatballs welcomes different points of view. Contact Mike Parker, electrician second shift, body shop, or you can email meatballs@rts-tech.com. Publication labor is volunteer and views are those of the writers.

## The new Lockout Instructions

Management is now putting a new emphasis on “safety.” As usual their main concern is showing well on the audits specified by higher-ups –not our safety.

As part of this the Trades are being run through Lockout training again. This is a good time for us all to review this important issue.

For more than a year many of us have been pointing out that the postings on cells say “refer to local lockout procedure.” But of course there has not been one—in writing—that management would provide—let alone post. At last we have one: The *Sterling Heights Assembly Plant Lockout Procedure* signed by SHAP Management “revised August 1, 2003.” (see over) As we go through the new round of official lockout training we are each given a copy.

Make sure to read it carefully and save it. While it is not perfect, it’s basically good policy and works for almost everything in the main building. For the first time we have a realistic lockout policy that provides for a good minimum level of safety and recognizes that we are the experts when it comes to machines we work on and we can determine appropriate *additional protections*. This policy did not come easy.

### **Before 2000, lockout policy was completely phony.**

While giving lip service to the OSHA policy of full energy lockout, the company actually taught something entirely different. If you want proof, look at the corporate video they are still using for lockout training --the one starring Dan D. as the expert. They essentially gave you a choice between an unworkable policy and one which wasn’t lockout at all. Over and over it shows in pictures and says in words that simply breaking a gate interlock is acceptable energy control. The safety trainer, Ron Twigg, does a good job of pointing out the misleading pictures and explaining the policy. But you would think that if corporate really took lockout seriously they would update this mandatory video.

Here was the old game: Management officially claimed to teach the full OSHA lockout requirement while establishing a policy in practice of operating the entire plant by unreasonably stretching a narrow OSHA exception referring to “repetitive” and “routine” production procedures. Thus for years most trades at Chrysler plants never used safety locks except on major repairs and new construction, if then. The only purpose of the official lockout policy was in

case of an accident management could blame the victim for failing to follow the official rules.

When a Toledo Machine Repairman, Larry Fuentes, was killed using this procedure in 2000, the company blamed it on failing to follow lockout procedures. In fact grievances in the plant had been written about supervisor instructions to jump out safety gate interlocks so that repair work could be performed without shutting down the line. At this point corporate began to insist on the use of safety locks on cycle-stop buttons. A good step, but we told them and showed them that this was not always safe. OSHA is explicit that this is not acceptable lockout where lockout is actually required. As a result many trades started using E-stop (citing an old company safety letter) and other measures when they felt safety required it.

**Corporate pushed through a revision of safety procedure SMI 107 which would effectively allow management to specify exactly what level of safety would be required for each job leaving the trades no discretion.** If management declared cycle-stop was adequate you could be disciplined for doing more. Actual practice in the plants showed that the real policy in the plants was to use cycle-stop for practically everything. Management tried to expand the OSHA exception so that cycle-stop covered it all.

### **But some actions stopped management.**

1. When a supervisor threatened an electrician with discipline for using E-stop, the electrician filed a complaint with MIOSHA. As a result of the MIOSHA investigation, Chrysler was cited for several violations. Chrysler appealed and sent corporate and plant reps to plead at an informal hearing last August in Lansing. Local President Bill Parker, Steward Brian Bess, and I were also present. Chrysler was surprised to find out that the MIOSHA violations were not for things that MIOSHA witnessed but were based on interviews. Corporate was especially surprised that MIOSHA would take the word of Chrysler workers. Also MIOSHA saw management’s attempt to broaden the OSHA exception and would have no part of it.
2. The Local Union leadership pressed hard for a realistic safety policy based on the MIOSHA discussion that respected the trades.

**The result is finally the plant policy now being given to the trades as part of safety training and the distribution of additional safety locks.**

-over-

## Safety is Our Policy

But a good written policy is only as good as we make it. Safe procedures and rights that are not exercised will wither away. Everyone knows that the pressure in this company is for getting production numbers, taking every shortcut possible. Whatever the official safety pronouncements, "hurry up" is the real company policy. ***We have to be the ones to make sure that the work is done safely.*** If use of E-stop causes sequencing problems, then it is up to management to schedule the work to solve those problems. When additional locks and full power lockout are necessary, such as for GSO cleaning, we should be sure that it is done.

## Beyond Lockout.

No matter what procedures are in effect, skilled maintenance work by its very nature will still be dangerous. It requires working in places and positions not designed for humans to work. Usually we are working on equipment that is not functioning normally. Right now management is worrying about cabinet door latches and coffeepot wiring. Let management deal with some of the real problems that could make our jobs and those of production workers safer.

- ♣ Skilled Trades should never work alone. The work is too complicated for only one person to watch out for the dangers. Even a minor accident can be major if there is no one available to help.
- ♣ Hire more GSOs and clean the floors in and around the machinery.
- ♣ Repair and install more weld screens. Improve the ventilation system that allows the dust and fumes in our lungs.
- ♣ Fix the grounds in the control circuits. Multiple grounds can completely defeat safety circuits.
- ♣ Make repair of water savers and leaks a safety priority. Water in the equipment increase the chances of malfunction. Water on the floor creates slippery conditions and increases hazards in working around electricity.
- ♣ Build platforms in cells so that it is not necessary to climb on robots or equipment to do work. (This is the policy in Canada.)
- ♣ Respect trade classifications.
- ♣ Trades should develop safety practices for group work.

—Mike Parker

## Post Script:

*After this was written, there was another MIOSHA Lansing hearing on the same issues, March 11. This time Corporate sent six people including two lawyers to try to get the charges dismissed. (Bill Parker, Kris Nyquist, and I were there.) MIOSHA has not yet ruled on this appeal. But it was clear that MIOSHA is likely to return to the plant to see if in fact we are operating safely under the above rules. Work safe and stay tuned for developments.*

—MP

## STERLING HEIGHTS ASSEMBLY PLANT LOCK-OUT PROCEDURE

THE STERLING HEIGHTS ASSEMBLY PLANT LOCK-OUT POLICY IS: "PRIOR TO ENTRY, THE ENTRANT MUST PLACE THEIR OWN LOCK(S) ON THE APPROPRIATE LOCK-OUT DEVICE(S)". THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS!

PROCEDURE: AS A MINIMUM, LOCK-OUT WILL BE DONE USING THE "E-STOP" BUTTON. THIS APPLIES TO ROUTINE, OR FREQUENT TASKS, AS WELL AS SCHEDULED OR NON-SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE. THE "E-STOP" BUTTON IS LOCATED ON THE PUSH BUTTON PANEL OR AT THE INTERLOCKED GATE FOR THE STATION THAT WORK IS BEING PERFORMED ON. HOWEVER, EACH SKILLED TRADES EMPLOYEE WILL DETERMINE ANY APPROPRIATE LOCK-OUT OVER THE MINIMUM TOWARDS ZERO ENERGY.

GSO'S WILL ENTER A CELL ONLY AFTER THE EQUIPMENT IS SHUT DOWN, AND LOCKED OUT BY A QUALIFIED ELECTRICIAN, AND THEY HAVE PLACED THEIR LOCK(S) AT THE MAIN PANEL DISCONNECT. THE ELECTRICIAN WILL LEAVE THEIR LOCK(S) ON UNTIL ALL GSO'S HAVE REMOVED THEIR LOCK(S).

"E-STOP" IS THE REQUIRED MINIMUM LOCK-OUT METHOD. HOWEVER, "C-STOP" CAN BE USED IN THE FOLLOWING THREE INSTANCES, PROVIDED ALTERNATE METHODS OF SECURING THE AREA ARE IN PLACE:

- 1- TEACHING ROBOTS (TEACH PENDANT ONLY WORKS IN "C" STOP)
- 2- TROUBLE SHOOTING & OBSERVATION ONLY
- 3- MAKING REQUIRED ELECTRICAL READINGS UNDER POWER (ie: USE OF VOLTMETER, WIGGIE, ETC.. AND DEVICE USED TO ACCESS LEADS, SUCH AS A SCREWDRIVER, ARE PERMITTED FOR USE IN DIAGNOSING A PROBLEM.)

TROUBLE SHOOTING STOPS WHEN THE PROBLEM IS DISCOVERED AND TOOLS INTRODUCED TO THE AREA. EQUIPMENT MUST BE LOCKED OUT, ON A MINIMUM OF "E-STOP", BEFORE CORRECTIVE ACTION IS STARTED!

WHEN PERFORMING SERVICING, IT IS NECESSARY TO VERIFY THE ISOLATION OF ALL HAZARDOUS ENERGY SOURCES THAT WORKER(S) MAY BE EXPOSED TO. CONSULT AND COMPLY WITH THE POSTED LOCKOUT GRAPHICS.

ALL AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEES, GSO'S, AND ADJUNCT EMPLOYEES WILL RECEIVE DOCUMENTED TRAINING/INSTRUCTION RELATED TO THIS PROCEDURE. SHAP MANAGEMENT.

## A full OSHA lockout requires:

- ⇒ Notification of all those involved including operators.
- ⇒ Placing individual locks on **every** relevant source of energy, including potential energy that might put us in danger. For us, this **may** mean locking the PIP panels, weld disconnects, and air shut-offs. It also means where applicable, bleeding of stored energy and pinning or blocking items that might move because of gravity or other actions.
- ⇒ Each person must apply his/her own lock.
- ⇒ After locking out you must confirm that it is effectively locked out by attempting to start the equipment.