**PRESS RELEASE**

Lock-out hazards to prevent accidents

***20 October, 2015:*** *At any given time in South Africa, three million workers are exposed to the hazards posed by volatile energies such as gas, fluids or steam, which are contained in various types of machinery undergoing routine servicing and maintenance.*

Craft workers, electricians, machine operators, and labourers are injured and even killed on the job from exposure to hazardous energy. The most effective means of minimising these risks is by securing and controlling the energy sources with an effective lock-out/tag-out (LOTO) system.

A LOTO system prevents unexpected start-up or release of stored energy by securing a padlock to a clamp in order to lock the machine being serviced or maintained. After being locked, a tag is placed on the machine to indicate that it should not be turned on.

North exports manager **Hayley Arnesen** explains that LOTO systems are used in industry and research settings to ensure that dangerous machines are properly shut off and not started up again prior to the completion of maintenance or servicing work, in order to avoid danger.

“The lack of a LOTO system, or improper handling of the system, may result in injuries that include; electrocution, burns, crushing, cutting, laceration, amputation, or fracturing of body parts. The unexpected start-ups can also cause extensive damage to the machinery itself, adding to the expense of equipment repairs and replacement to the total cost involved,” she warns.

Arnesen stresses that trained personnel should always manage the LOTO system. “For instance, if a steam valve automatically gets turned on, it might burn the workers who are repairing a downstream connection in the piping. Another scenario is the sudden release of a jammed conveyor system, which can result in the crushing of workers, if not properly managed,” she says.

According to Arnesen, it is the responsibility of the employer to develop and implement an energy control procedure that provides authorised and affected employees with the same level of protection as a personal lock-out or tag-out device.

“A good LOTO system consists not only of clearly labelled energy sources and easy-to-follow procedures, but also quality and accessible lock-out tools to ensure smooth and quick maintenance and servicing activities,” she continues.

North offers a wide variety of padlocks that are available in nylon, aluminium, steel and brass body options. Nylon body padlocks are best-suited to electrical applications, due to the non-conductive properties of the material. Temperature and corrosion-resistant aluminium body padlocks are ideal for high-temperature outdoor applications up to 580 °C.

Due to their strong physical resistance characteristics, steel body padlocks are designed for severe physical environments, while spark-resistant brass body padlocks are ideal for use in flammable applications. The North range of padlocks feature shackle diameters ranging from 4,7 mm to 7 mm, and have shackle heights ranging from 20 mm to 75 mm.

***Ends***

**Notes to the editor**There are numerous photographs specific to this press release. Please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the North Safety Products Africa link.

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