



OCTOBER 2023

TOOLBOX TALKS

Look-A-Like Equipment

An event can result from an individual starting an activity on the wrong but similar looking equipment component or taking a break or being distracted from one component and subsequently going back to work on an adjacent, similar look alike—but wrong—component.

Understanding how an error likely situation could occur when there is look alike equipment on renewable energy projects is very important to recognize as it could be a precursor to causing a serious injury as we work around energized electrical components within our industry.

As a recent example on a solar project an electrical worker was assigned a few punch list items on a power conversion system (PCS) and experienced a significant near miss in which they opened the incorrect PCS which was actually energized. The team member did not recognize the 3"x 6" Lockout Tagout (LOTO) tag that was attached to the PCS on the main entry door as the punch list task was on the backside of the PCS. Fortunately, the team member performed a "live-dead-live" test and was able to recognize this component was energized.

When the team reflected on this event they recognized that the LOTO tag was not easily identifiable to the electrical workers involved in this task. A key learning from this near miss has allowed the team to improve the process on how they clearly identify and flag energized look alike equipment across all their operations so that a similar error likely situation can be eliminated. In the photo below the team has now clearly identified energized look alike equipment the utilization of red safety chains wrapped around the entire PCS component along with danger signs posted on all sides of the equipment.



Example of a PCS without red safety chains installed:



One powerful human performance improvement tool is understanding how to implement flagging and barriers as operational controls to mitigate the error likely situation of starting an activity on the wrong but similar looking equipment component or taking a break or being distracted from one component and subsequently going back to work on an adjacent, similar look alike—but wrong—component.

Where may you have look alike equipment that could pose an energized electrical hazard?

How is your team flagging and/or utilizing barriers to eliminate the potential to make contact with electrical energy sources?