**Issue**

This health and safety hazard alert applies to schools with plant, machinery or equipment (“equipment’).

In order to manage safety risks, schools with this equipment must implement effective isolation and tag out procedures whenever there is a need to perform maintenance, inspection, cleaning or repair of equipment or whenever removing unsafe equipment from use.

People performing maintenance, service, cleaning or repair, or working to correct unintended stoppages or jams are at risk of accidental start-up or movement of powered equipment that hasn’t been properly isolated from power sources. Similarly, people may also be at risk if they use defective powered equipment that hasn’t been locked out or removed from service.

Examples of unsafe equipment may include:

* equipment does not work or fails intermittently
* electrical lead insulation that is pulled away from the plug, exposing the wires
* electrical plant and equipment that does not start/stop when switched on and connected to a power source or operates in an unusual manner
* signs of damage and/or excessive wear and tear; for example, exposed wires, missing or damaged guards, signs of scorching or degraded fluid or gas lines
* leaking fluids (e.g. brake, hydraulic)
* damaged pins/plugs on electrical leads
* rusted or damaged gas or mechanical fittings.

Equipment that cannot be isolated from its energy source (such as mains electrical supply) may represent a hazard to staff and students.

**Schools with equipment are requested to check and ensure all equipment can be isolated, or disconnected from the power source, and can be locked out by use of built-in keyed devices, padlocks, or isolation clamps.**

Guidance is available at [Plant and Equipment](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/plantequip.aspx) and support can be provided by the Department’s [OHS Advisory Service](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/employeeservices.aspx#link58) who can visit your school to help implement the safety procedures.

If equipment cannot be isolated and locked out, it is recommended a qualified electrician be engaged to install isolation devices.

If there are situations where isolation is not practicable or if equipment can only be cleaned, maintained, repaired or adjusted while energised, schools should contact the [OHS Advisory Service](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/employeeservices.aspx#link58) for advice.

Safe work procedures must be developed and staff who work with the machinery, plant or equipment should be trained in how to safely operate and shut down and de-energise equipment, and where appropriate to carry out installation, maintenance, service, repair or cleaning of the equipment.

Schools must also ensure there is a **tag out** **system** to identify out of service or faulty equipment. Out of service or faulty items must be tagged and isolated or removed from service. ‘Out of Service’ and ‘Danger Do Not Operate’ tags must be readily available. Equipment must only be returned to service when the defect or condition which necessitated its removal for service has been repaired or corrected.

Isolation and tag out is an administrative control and must not be used as an alternative to interlocking unless it is not reasonably practicable to use interlocking.

**More information**

More information on isolation and tag out is available at the Department’s Health and Safety Management System: [Plant and Equipment](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/plantequip.aspx)

Information can also be obtained at the Department’s [OHS Management System](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/ohsmgtsystem.aspx?Redirect=1) website or by contacting the Department’s OHS Advisory Service on **1300 074 715,** email safety@edumail.vic.gov.au or contacting your local [Regional OHS & Facilities Support Officers](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/ohsworksafecontacts.aspx).

**References**

[Isolation and Tag Out Procedure](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/isolationtagout.docx) (Department)

[Machinery and equipment safety – an introduction](https://content.api.worksafe.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-06/ISBN-Machinery-and-equipment-safety-introduction-handbook-2017-06.pdf) (WorkSafe Victoria)

[Compliance Code - Plant](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/compliance-code-plant) (WorkSafe Victoria)

Australian Standard AS4024 Safety of Machinery