

N3417. THE NUCLEAR MAINTENANCE

CHALLENGE: To improve the sling inspection program.

RESPONSE: Tool room attendants at Palisades Nuclear Plant in Michigan have developed an effective lifting-sling life management program. Improved procedures and color-coded tags make it easier to effectively track and inspect every sling in the plant.

Early procedures at Palisades did not provide specific criteria for testing slings. The current program lists a number of items, any one of which would cause a sling to be rejected and destroyed.

The storeroom notifies the tool room before issuing a sling, allowing attendants to inspect it and to record such information as the purchase date, identification number, lifting capacity and the sling's location in the plant. After a sling is issued, it is inspected annually, and the inspection history is also recorded on the card.

The most viable component of the program is the color-coded tag used to mark each sling after inspection. The durable plastic tag, attached with steel split rings or cable ties, allows workers to know at a glance whether a sling's inspection is current.

According to Rich Chapman and Tim Nicholson, mechanical repair workers and the inspection program's developers, the new tagging system has helped bring heightened awareness to the rest of the plant about the need to check slings annually. Workers questioning the inspection tags can return the slings to the tool room for inspection.

The program covers more than just slings. All lifting equipment, including nylon harnesses, rigging and chain hoists, is tracked and inspected annually.

In addition to the safety and tracking benefits, this new approach to sling inspections has also reduced the insurance premiums the Consumers Power Company plant pay each year.

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