

Fatal 1 - Socomec safety isolator - operator found he was able to remove padlock whilst isolated

WHAT HAPPENED

Whilst trying out an isolation at an asphalt plant during a major regeneration project, a new Socomec safety enclosure isolator was discovered to be faulty, meaning the locked padlock could be removed whilst the system was isolated.



An asphalt plant engineer discovered whilst 'trying out' his isolation, that it was possible to remove his locked padlock from the isolator by depressing the handle past its 'OFF' position.

In the 'OFF' position, the isolator handle is turned downwards, and a lock applied to prevent the handle being switched back to 'ON'. The handle also acts as a barrier to prevent the lock sliding to the right. This issue highlighted that the handle could be depressed so far that the lock could be slipped off the locking shaft. See image below



During a thorough investigation it was discovered that a square nut, which is intended to prevent the handle being depressed past its limit, had become loose and moved. This meant that the handle could be depressed further than intended, this allowed the padlock to 'slip' off.



As part of the company's continual drive to reduce risk, it has recently been introducing Socomec Safety enclosure isolators into the business. These isolators are a strong robust method of isolation offering better integrity and functionality than traditional alternatives. However, this incident has highlighted that, due to this manufacturing issue, there may be flaws in some models.

LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

The company put the following actions in place

- With immediate effect, it instructed all unit managers to investigate, by trial, whether they can depress their Socomec isolators handles far enough to slip the padlock off. A padlock must be applied, and physical trial undertaken.
- A sign off sheet must be provided stating the isolator name, date, time and the result of the test.
- Any isolator found to be faulty will be marked using defective equipment documentation and a plan put in place to rectify the problem.
- Contact will be made with the OEM to find permanent solution.

LOCATION:	ASPHALT/COATING PLANT	ALERT STATUS:	High Potential
ACTIVITY:	GUARDING AND ISOLATION	DATE ISSUED:	16/01/2024 13:55:49
SUB ACTIVITY:	NO SUB ACTIVITY AVAILABLE	INCIDENT No:	03690