



Stopping Work Safety Talk

When there are hazards present or some other issue that interferes with being able to perform a work task safely then it is important to feel comfortable to stop the work until it is safe to continue. Many companies stress the importance of being able to stop work without punishment, but there are many employees who do not feel comfortable doing this for many reasons.

Reasons Why Individuals are Afraid to Stop

- Afraid of punishment from supervisors
- Want to avoid conflict with others
- Do not want to be seen as scared or a "snitch"
- Do not want to slow work down

It is easier said than done to stop work in the name of safety, but it needs to be communicated that it is encouraged and okay to do so. Even if the highest levels of management in a company stress the importance of being able to stop work, a single individual can make it hard for the employees on the work site to actually do so comfortably. Employees need to know different avenues of reporting safety hazards to the management in a company. If a certain manager or supervisor makes it uncomfortable for you to stop work or report a hazard, go to another supervisor or your safety officer to do so. You should be able to go to someone who will work to fix the problem as well as not disclose who reported the hazard in the first place if you feel that you could be punished for doing so. Outside of the company you have the right as an employee to report safety issues to OSHA without the fear of retaliation. You can do so confidentially.

Reasons to Stop Work

- To protect yourself and your fellow coworkers
- To protect property or equipment from damage or loss
- To protect the company's bottom line and reputation

Situations Where Stopping Work is Necessary

- When there is an unaddressed hazard.
- When **the correct personnel** are not a part of the task. For example- a company policy states that a spotter is needed while working on an aerial lift and the spotter needs to leave the area. You need to stop work until the spotter returns.



- When you do not have the right tool or equipment for the job. Using tools not designed for the task can lead to an incident.
- When you do not understand the work task or procedures. Stop and get clarification for the task.
- When you do not have the correct knowledge or training to do a task safely.

Summary

These are just a few of the situations where stopping work is necessary. Individuals need to feel comfortable stopping work to address whatever the problem is to be able to complete the work safely and efficiently. Many times the fixes that will make a job safer are quick and easy. You have the power to make a difference and stop work when it is needed. Despite how uncomfortable some of these situations can be, if an incident occurs it is much more painful for everyone involved.

Discussion points:

- What are some situations that could come up in your work today where stopping work is necessary?
- Do you feel comfortable stopping work? Why or why not?
- Discuss a past incident and how stopping work could have prevented it.