



Toolbox Talks

Stop Work Authority



Stop Work Authority is a policy that organizations can adopt to empower employees, at any level, to immediately halt a job or task at work when a hazardous situation appears imminent, without fear of retribution.

- Adding Stop Work Authority to a health and safety program is a good way to strengthen the safety culture at an organization when workers know they can exercise SWA without repercussion.
- The Stop Work Authority procedures should cover everyone at a work location or on the job site including employees, contractors, subcontractors and visitors.

Every organization will set up their Stop Work Authority program differently, but the general steps of a SWA procedure are as follows:

1. **Stop the work.** When an unsafe action or situation is observed, the work is immediately halted.
2. **Notify the affected personnel and supervisor.** Provide a clear explanation of the reason why the work was stopped. Take immediate action to make the area safe.
3. **Investigate the reason why the work was halted.** Review and discuss the situation and come to an agreement on the stop work action.
4. **Correct the unsafe behavior or situation.** Hazards should be eliminated before work resumes.
5. **Resume the work.** After corrective actions have been completed all affected personnel should be notified that work can continue.
6. **Monitor and follow-up.** While immediate corrections may have eliminated the hazard, additional actions may be implemented to prevent future occurrences. Preventative actions may include monitoring activity, root cause analysis, additional training, safety program updates, follow-up inspections, further investigation, targeted safety meetings, or documentation.

The following excuses are not good reasons for any worker to fail to use their authority to stop work when unsafe actions or a hazardous situation arises at work.

- Fear of alienating a co-worker by calling them out on an unsafe act.
- An unsafe act may be performed by someone with more experience, and you feel like it is not your place to call attention to the risky behavior.
- Anxiety that you have misinterpreted the situation.
- Peer pressure influencing you not to speak up.
- Fear of embarrassment, ridicule or angering a supervisor.

