CrewSigned

Stop Work Authority Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

On this crew, anyone can stop a job they believe is unsafe. That includes the newest helper on their first day, and it includes stopping work that I am running. This is called stop work authority, and today I want to be clear about how it works, because it only helps if people actually use it.

Think about the times something went wrong on a job you were on. Usually somebody had a bad feeling first. They saw the trench wall cracking, the load rigged wrong, the guy without a harness, the cord in the water. And they did not say anything because they were new, or it was not their trade, or the boss was in a hurry. Stop work authority is for that moment.

Here is how to use it. Say it clearly: stop, I have a safety concern. If you need to, step in front of the hazard or signal the operator. Make sure everyone involved stops and the work is in a safe position. Then explain what you saw. You do not need to be sure. If you think someone could get hurt, that is enough.

What happens next matters just as much. We talk about it together. Sometimes we find a real hazard and fix it. Sometimes there is a good answer and we explain it. Either way, the work does not start again until the concern is resolved, and the person who called the stop agrees, or a supervisor has looked at it. If you are not satisfied, call me.

Nobody gets in trouble for calling a stop in good faith. Not if it turns out fine, and not if it costs us an hour. A stop that turns out to be unnecessary is still a good stop. It is also your legal right. Federal law protects workers who report hazards or refuse to do work that poses an imminent danger of death or serious injury, after asking for it to be fixed.

If someone stops your work, do not argue or take it personally. Thank them and look at what they saw. Next time it might be you who spots it. The goal is simple: everyone goes home the way they came in.

Discussion questions

1. Have you ever kept working on something that felt unsafe because you did not want to slow the job down?
2. What words would you use to stop a job someone with more experience was running?
3. What should happen after a stop so the crew can get back to work safely?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1977.12, Workers' rights under the OSH Act
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1977/1977.12

SOURCES

OSHA, Workers' Right to Refuse Dangerous Work: https://www.osha.gov/workers/right-to-refuse
OSHA Safety Management, Worker Participation: https://www.osha.gov/safety-management/worker-participation
Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs (OSHA 3885): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3885.pdf

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Stop Work Authority Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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