

## Stop Work Authority

Unsafe acts and conditions may occur at anytime in the workplace, which could result in an injury or property damage. Recognizing and stopping unsafe acts or conditions is known as your **Stop Work Authority** (SWA), and is critical to ensure your safety, the safety of others, and the protection of property. As an employee of Northwestern, you have the authority and are expected to stop work, including contractor work, when you observe unsafe acts or conditions.

Below are some examples of situations that may require a stop-work action:

- The potential release of hazardous energy, such as steam or electricity
- Witnessing someone standing on the top rung of a self-supporting ladder, which is a fall hazard
- Inadequate personnel for the job (e.g., fire watch not present during welding activities)
- Change of scope of work that may introduce new hazards or require additional personnel or training
- Not having the right tool or equipment for the job
- Witnessing the misuse of a tool or equipment
- Inadequate training or understanding to perform a task safely

### Incidents

All work must be stopped when an incident occurs (e.g., injuries, property damage, near misses) to determine what went wrong and how to ensure it doesn't happen again.

#### Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

**Preparation is Key:** Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review stop work authority in your work area and discuss how your team will respond to unexpected workplace hazards or unsafe acts.

**Stay Positive:** Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

**Share a Story, Ask for a Story:** Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

### Stop work authority process



Follow the SWA steps below to ensure all hazards are identified and addressed in a stop-work action:

1. **Stop** the work when you observe an unsafe act or condition by notifying the individuals involved.
2. **Notify** your supervisor and Northwestern Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) of the stop-work action and explain clearly why the work was stopped.
3. **Investigate.** Supervisors and EHS will review the scope of work and identify the hazards.
4. **Correct** the work situation. Supervisors and EHS will identify corrective actions and ensure that controls are implemented to address the unsafe act or condition (e.g., training, additional equipment, or tools). All hazards must be addressed before resuming work.
5. **Resume** the work and notify all affected personnel.
6. **Follow-up** procedures may be implemented to prevent future occurrences (e.g., inspections, training, safety meetings, and procedure updates).

### Job hazard analysis

Planning for a job ensures that all hazards are controlled or eliminated and can prevent the need to stop work, which may result in project delays and business disruptions. Plan your work by utilizing a job hazard analysis (JHA), which analyzes how each step of a job could lead to a potential hazard and what can be done to prevent or control them. Below are the basic steps of a JHA:

1. Select the job to be analyzed
2. Break the job down into a sequence of steps and note who will perform each step
3. Identify the potential hazards that may lead to injury (e.g., release of hazardous energy, working at heights)
4. Determine the preventative measures for each hazard (e.g., lockout/tagout, personal protective equipment)
5. Communicate the JHA plan to everyone involved

**Learn more:** Complete [Job Hazard Analysis](#) and [Behavior-Based Safety](#) training and review the [Safe Job Planning](#) Spotlight on Safety

**Report all injuries:** [Online](#) or call (847) 491-5582

**For Additional Information** Contact Environmental Health & Safety at [ehs@northwestern.edu](mailto:ehs@northwestern.edu)