Toolbox talk

Speaking up and stopping unsafe work

If it's not safe, say so

10 minutes | For: Everyone on site, including supervisors

Why it matters

Many accidents happen when someone saw a problem but didn't feel able to say anything. Everyone at work has a legal duty to look out for themselves and others, and the law protects people who raise genuine safety concerns.

Key points

1. By law, you must take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of others.
2. You must tell your employer about serious and immediate danger, and gaps in their safety arrangements.
3. If you face serious and imminent danger, you can stop work and get to a place of safety.
4. The law protects workers who leave, or refuse to return to, danger they reasonably believe is serious and imminent.
5. Raise concerns with your supervisor, the principal contractor or your safety representative.
6. If your concern isn't dealt with, you can report it to HSE using its online form.
7. Supervisors: thank people for speaking up, act on it, and tell them what you did.
8. A near miss reported today could stop a serious injury tomorrow.

Sources: Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 7 (legislation.gov.uk); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulations 8 and 14; Employment Rights Act 1996, section 44 (legislation.gov.uk); HSE: Reporting a concern about a workplace.

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/speak-up-stop-work**

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Do

- ✓ Speak up as soon as you see something unsafe.
- ✓ Explain what you saw and why it worries you.
- ✓ Stop the job if someone is in immediate danger.
- ✓ Back up workmates who raise a concern.
- ✓ Follow up if nothing happens.

Don't

- ✗ Don't assume someone else has already reported it.
- ✗ Don't carry on with work you believe is seriously dangerous.
- ✗ Don't make fun of or blame people who speak up.
- ✗ Don't let deadlines override safety.

Ask the group

- Has anything on this site made you uneasy this week?
- What stops people speaking up on site?
- Who would you go to if your supervisor didn't act?
- How should we respond when someone stops a job?

If it goes wrong: If someone is in immediate danger, stop the work and warn them. Call 999 if anyone is hurt. Report what happened to your supervisor. If a serious safety concern isn't dealt with, you can report it to HSE online.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____ Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

Sources: Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 7 (legislation.gov.uk); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulations 8 and 14; Employment Rights Act 1996, section 44 (legislation.gov.uk); HSE: Reporting a concern about a workplace.

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Attendance register

Speaking up and stopping unsafe work

Site / project

Date and time

Presented by

Company

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature

Follow-up actions

Scan for the latest version of this talk online ›

Go further: Dynamic risk assessment: responding when site conditions change

Sources: Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 7 (legislation.gov.uk); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulations 8 and 14; Employment Rights Act 1996, section 44 (legislation.gov.uk); HSE: Reporting a concern about a workplace.

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Quick check

Speaking up and stopping unsafe work

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. What does the law say about your own safety and others'?

- [ ] It's only the boss's job
- [ ] You must take reasonable care of yourself and others
- [ ] Only supervisors have duties

2. You face serious and imminent danger. What can you do?

- [ ] Nothing until a manager arrives
- [ ] Stop work and get to a place of safety
- [ ] Keep working faster

3. Can you be punished for leaving a seriously dangerous situation?

- [ ] Yes, always
- [ ] No, the law protects workers who reasonably believe the danger is serious and imminent
- [ ] Only if you're an apprentice

4. Your concern was ignored on site. What can you do?

- [ ] Nothing
- [ ] Raise it with the principal contractor, a safety rep, or report it to HSE
- [ ] Post it on social media

5. How should supervisors respond when someone speaks up?

- [ ] Tell them to get on with it
- [ ] Thank them, act on it and tell them what was done
- [ ] Ignore it if busy

Sources: Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 7 (legislation.gov.uk); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulations 8 and 14; Employment Rights Act 1996, section 44 (legislation.gov.uk); HSE: Reporting a concern about a workplace.

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. You must take reasonable care of yourself and others

Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places this duty on every employee.

2. Stop work and get to a place of safety

Employers' procedures must let workers stop work and go to a safe place when danger is serious and imminent.

3. No, the law protects workers who reasonably believe the danger is serious and imminent

Employment law protects workers from detriment for leaving or refusing to return to serious and imminent danger.

4. Raise it with the principal contractor, a safety rep, or report it to HSE

You can escalate on site, and HSE has an online form for reporting workplace concerns.

5. Thank them, act on it and tell them what was done

People keep reporting when they see their concerns taken seriously and acted on.

Sources

- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 7 (legislation.gov.uk)
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/7
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulations 8 and 14
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/contents
- Employment Rights Act 1996, section 44 (legislation.gov.uk)
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/18/section/44
- HSE: Reporting a concern about a workplace
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/tell-us-about-a-health-and-safety-issue.htm

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

Sources: Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 7 (legislation.gov.uk); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulations 8 and 14; Employment Rights Act 1996, section 44 (legislation.gov.uk); HSE: Reporting a concern about a workplace.

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See it. Say it. Stop it.

1. **Speak up straight away**
2. **Stop work if danger is serious**
3. **Thank people who raise concerns**

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Sources and qualifications

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Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 7

Reasonable care for self/others and cooperation; key point 1.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/7

S2. Management Regulations 1999

Regulations 8 and 14: serious/imminent danger procedures and employee reporting/cooperation duties; key points 2-3.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/contents

S3. Employment Rights Act 1996, section 44

Protection from detriment in the specified health/safety circumstances, including a reasonable belief of serious and imminent danger; key point 4.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/18/section/44

S4. HSE: Report a workplace concern

Escalating unresolved safety concerns; Do/Don't, emergency box and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/tell-us-about-a-health-and-safety-issue.htm