

Stop Work Authority is one of the standard topics in our Training Center safety meetings held each Friday morning. If classes are in session, we are there to talk to students about safety. The way I usually handle the discussion of Stop Work Authority is to use real events to stress the point of not just the authority to stop work but also the reality of “Stop Work Responsibility.” This approach works well because managers that participate in the safety meeting are there to reinforce that they will support them, and as I have heard them say, “back there play” when they use their authority to stop.

Stop Work Authority is also a topic for special sessions. A good example is this week’s safety stand down with a group of our company. The Stop Work Authority process was reviewed procedurally, it was reinforced by an executive, and then covered again in the in the course of the safety session.

One of the goals in using safety meetings as the venue to encourage the use of stop work authority is feedback. I try to get others to talk of how they used the process with positive results. In this way workers can hear from their co-workers that it is a real process. I believe that the facts I share about the process tell people about the effort, but the stories from co-workers that have used the process sells it as real.

I believe that one of the areas that has proved successful for us is in the area of culture change. We work the safety effort very hard to be visible while encouraging others to be engaged and empowered to do something that not only makes themselves safe but the others around them safe. I believe our improvements partially stem from the simple fact that our workers are more engaged and feel that they are able to say and do what is right to make operations safer. I see it in the increased readership of the safety blog, in safety meetings I conduct that are not just a lecture but are discussions, and I see it in every day workers that contribute. A day does not go by that workers are not coming by to talk about safety where they work. Their engagement builds a pride of accomplishment they want to share.

Stop Work Authority is part of all of the above. When it comes to safe operations, we are never done. It takes an ever increasing effort to make the next steps. But if we can continue to get workers to take their safety personally, get workers to ask the right questions about managing risk and convince workers of their role in culture change and escalate worker engagement, I believe we will continue to make positive impact in our efforts to zero.