

# STOP WORK AUTHORITY (SWA)



SWA is a safety policy or procedure that authorizes and empowers employees to stop an action or condition they consider to be unsafe. The goal of SWA is to encourage workers to speak up without fear of retribution from others within the organization.

## Regulatory applications: 1977.12(b)(2)

*Occasions might arise when an employee is confronted with a choice between not performing assigned tasks or subjecting himself to serious injury or death arising from a hazardous condition at the workplace. If the employee, with no reasonable alternative, refuses in good faith to expose himself to the dangerous condition, he would be protected against subsequent discrimination.*

OSHA Worker Right's

Giving SWA to all employees is management's last line of defense to ensure workers are not asked to perform unsafe tasks. SWA is not a regulatory requirement but is considered to be an important policy for an effective safety program by many leading safety professionals. The steps for a SWA process are listed below.



### Step 1 Stop Work

- The worker notifies on-site employees and supervisors that they are initiating SWA. Designated staff are immediately notified that SWA has been initiated and the location of the job site.



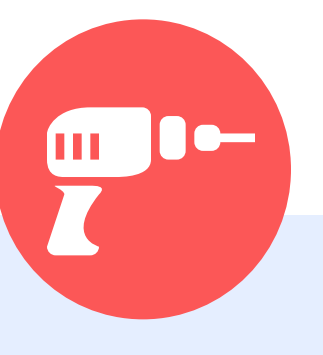
### Step 2 Investigate the cause for intervention

- Designated staff work with the on-site supervisors and affected persons to investigate and explore solutions to the identified hazards.



### Step 3 Correct the Hazard

- The hazard is corrected in a manner that is agreed upon by all relevant parties.



### Step 4 Resume Work

- The designated person (usually the company's internal safety professional) then authorizes work to restart; corrections of the hazards are communicated to all those involved on the job site.



### Step 5 Follow-up

- The incident is published and communicated throughout the company for educational purposes and to learn to avoid similar hazards in the future.

The organizational safety team and executive management must support this policy and ensure all SWA reports are a work priority when reported from the field. Ignoring or not formally addressing SWA reports is the quickest way to undermine this procedure and lose employee support.

SWA is not a magic bullet that will ensure all workers are not exposed to hazardous situations. It is a formal program that allows all workers to express concerns when they feel their assigned work is not safe. This policy should be communicated to all employees and easily enacted; most organizations provide cell phone numbers of select management, which workers can call to initiate SWA. The safety department typically investigates the SWA and plays a significant role in deciding when work can safely resume after SWA is initiated. Customize a short and concise policy that will work for your organization. Involve experienced staff members that are capable of problem-solving and quickly identifying solutions to problems that can occur in the field.

Toolbox Talk