

VOLTS News

Valuing Our Lives Through Safety

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VOLTS Data Report for June

Total Observations:	351
IPSC Emp. Contact Rate:	1.06
Total Safe Behaviors:	3,920
Total At-Risk Behaviors:	26

Top 3 Safe Behaviors

- Eyes and Face
- Head
- Eyes on Task

Top 3 At-Risk Exposures

- Walking/Working Surfaces
- Fall
- Hand

Moments of “Pause and Stop Work”

by Casey Draper



In most organizations, employees recognize the meaning of the term “Stop-Work authority” where every employee has the established right to call work to a halt if they determine the work is too at-risk to continue. However, all too often, the correct intention does not play out as it has been defined. So, why do people hesitate? How can we as an organization avoid Stop-Work authority from becoming a practice on paper alone (Jackson, D. 2018)?

One of the key concepts Sylvester Mayo, DEKRA Representative, discussed during a recent Lunchtime Wellness meeting is that exposures are dynamic. And because of that, it is critical for all employees to understand the concepts and practices of Pause Work. “*Pause work* is simply the opportunity to pause the work for a short period of time to perform an assessment...An exposure isn’t static; it changes over time...*Pause work* is a quick mental check of the situation when an exposure is recognized so it can be controlled. ...Moments of *pause work* can lead to *stop work* when necessary” (Mayo, 2022).

Watch for—and use—Pause-Work opportunities to improve working conditions before a potential exposure becomes a near miss, incident, or accident. Don’t keep working if you think something bad is going to happen (Mayo, 2022). If you see something, say something!

Watch Out Situations

- ⇒ Any time you have an uneasy feeling about the situation
- ⇒ Any sudden changes
- ⇒ When a job is not progressing as anticipated

Moments of “Pause and Stop Work”—Casey Draper (cont.)

- ⇒ Introduction of additional labor or crew members
- ⇒ Any time you introduce heavy equipment around people or vehicles

Most organizations and leaders will find a wide variability among employees and work groups regarding their tolerance to exposure. Regardless of individual tolerance to it, exposure is something that everyone can recognize with training. Any time we see exposures increase—regardless of our unique tolerance to risk—we have the opportunity to pause, step back, and evaluate.

Typing it All Together

It is important to build and support a high value for safety across an entire organization. As a Backshift Electrician, Alan Wood (personal communication, July 18, 2022), described a Pause-Work moment while working in the basement of the Coal Car Unloading Building. He was assigned to troubleshoot a broken light fixture that was identified as an action item during an Area Walkdown. The light fixture in need of repair was about 20 feet above the concrete floor and attached to a cement column. Initially Alan felt he could reach the light fixture from a large extension ladder. However, after contemplating the risk of overextending his body and working from an awkward angle, he became uneasy about the situation and decided that fall protection would be needed.

Knowing that the EMT/Safety Specialists would be willing to provide fall protection, he contacted the Safety Supervisor and asked to have someone meet him in the area so he could explain the task. Together the decision was made that, because of the lack of anchor points and the frequency of ascending and descending the tall ladder, the best way to access the difficult light fixture would be to build a scaffold from the bottom up. Alan recalls being a little hesitant about placing the work order to have the scaffold built because of the inconvenience to the scaffold crew. Building the scaffold could take several hours of work for the crew for a 30-minute job to repair the light fixture.

But, understanding that it was more important to focus on the need to minimize the exposure, Alan decided to take the proactive approach and eliminate the exposure to himself or others of working from height while repairing the light fixture.

It is Pause-Work situations like these that, if recognized, can help people preemptively control exposures and empower everyone to build a safety culture that supports Stop-Work authority and Pause-Work opportunities. We encourage a safety culture that, if necessary, uses the Stop-Work Authority where employees are willing to speak up before a coworker places himself or others at risk...because We Value Our Lives Through Safety by helping one another at work so everyone returns home safely. **What's Your Why?**

References

- Jackson, D. (2018). *Assuring the intention of stop-work authority* [White paper]. <https://www.dekra.us/media/wp-assuring-the-intention-of-stop-work-authority.pdf>
- Mayo, S. (2022, June). *Pause work* [Video]. Lunchtime Wellness Meeting. <V:\DEKRA\ Dekra Pause Work Lunch Time Meeting>

