

Component Flagging: Confirm the Right Item

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 9, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

A temporary visual marker can help someone return to the intended item among similar components. It can also direct everyone to the wrong item if it was placed incorrectly. Establish identity before using the marker, agree its meaning and keep the formal identification and protection systems intact.

Objective: Verify an approved component-identification aid, explain its limited meaning and resolve a missing or ambiguous marker before relying on it.

Key hazards or failure points

Flag placed on the wrong component; similar markers with opposite meanings; a marker hiding a label or indicator; unsuitable material; a loose or stale marker; identification mistaken for isolation or permission to operate.

Practical controls

- Use component flagging only under the site's approved arrangement. Identify the responsible person, permitted device, exact meaning, placement and removal process. This lesson concerns component identification, not traffic flagging.
- Have the authorized person establish the actual component identity against the current instruction before placing an aid. Apply it only by the approved safe method; do not enter a hazard area to improve visibility.
- Keep labels, indicators and required tags readable and equipment unobstructed. Keep the aid distinct from lockout, danger and clearance systems. Follow the approved process for changed work, handoff and removal when the aid is no longer needed.

Verify It in the Field

From a safe position, compare the component's permanent identifier, task instruction and temporary aid. Record the exact item and marker meaning. A match to the marker alone does not establish the correct component.

Check the approved device and placement requirements. Confirm that the aid is secure as specified and does not obscure information or interfere with equipment. Do not tug, touch, open or operate equipment to demonstrate this check.

Ask another affected worker to explain what the aid means and what it does not prove. Check the named owner and removal or handoff requirement. Record the actual finding, time and unresolved issue; resolve different interpretations before reliance.

Stop and reassess

Hold the affected action if identity is uncertain, the aid is displaced, meanings conflict or required information is obscured. Notify the responsible person and re-establish identity through the approved process. Never move a marker to a likely item or disturb a safety tag. Resume only with required task checks and authorization.

Ask the crew

1. What establishes this item's identity before a marker is applied?
2. What does this marker mean, and what does it not prove?
3. Who resolves a missing marker and controls its removal?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2, p. 51; OSHA 1910.147(a), (c)(5)(ii).

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/component-flagging-correct-item

Based on DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to authorship or copyright ownership of original U.S. Government work. Todd Jerome Jenkins adaptation; no government endorsement implied.