

Peer Checking: Agree the Action Before It Happens

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

Why this matters

A peer check gives another prepared person a chance to catch an incorrect action before or while it occurs. It works only when both people know the task, can observe safely and are ready to pause it. A second person standing nearby is not automatically performing a useful check.

Objective: Agree the intended item and action with a prepared peer, then demonstrate a clear pause response without operating equipment.

Key hazards or failure points

Acting before the peer is ready; an obstructed view; an unfamiliar or distracted checker; copying the other person's assumption; reluctance to question; treating observation as proof of the final condition.

Practical controls

- Follow the task's requirements for peer checking. Assign a performer and a peer with the required preparation, competence and authority. Both review the governing instruction and identify the intended item and action.
- Before action, agree readiness, the observation position and the task's stop signal. Make it clear that either person can raise a mismatch. Protect the peer from the same hazards as the performer.
- During authorized work, the peer observes the specified action and communicates a mismatch promptly. The performer still follows the procedure and self-checks. Retain required condition verification, specialist checks and work-release authority.

Verify It in the Field

Use a clearly announced paper or non-operating example. Have each person identify the item and instruction separately, then compare their intended action. Resolve disagreement against the governing source rather than seniority or confidence.

Rehearse an announced mismatch with no hazardous movement. Confirm that the peer notices, gives the agreed pause signal and the performer responds. Record what the exercise showed and any communication gap needing correction.

Before actual work, confirm safe visibility, communication and readiness at the required positions. Record the step, required check method and responsible people. During the authorized task, document the actual check as required; a rehearsal or advance signature does not complete it.

Stop and reassess

Hold when either person is unready, loses the necessary view or communication, identifies a mismatch or no longer knows the step's status. Use the prescribed safe response; do not reach into hazardous movement to stop the performer. Re-establish the item, instruction, readiness and required authorization before resuming.

Ask the crew

1. What exact action is the peer expected to check?
2. Can the peer observe and communicate without exposure?
3. What required condition check still applies after the action?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2, pp. 41–43; OSHA Hazard Prevention and Control.

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

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/peer-checking-agree-action-before-it-happens

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