

Assumptions: Show What Is Known and What Is Not

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Why this matters

A statement can sound settled even when nobody has checked it: the replacement is equivalent, the route is available or the earlier result still applies. Make that uncertainty visible before another decision depends on it. Recording an assumption helps assign verification; it does not make an unknown condition safe.

Objective: Identify one assumption, record the consequence if it is wrong and establish who must validate it before the affected work relies on it.

Key hazards or failure points

Preliminary information treated as final; an old check applied to changed work; an expert's confidence substituted for evidence; undocumented design judgment; an open assumption disappearing during a handoff.

Practical controls

- Write the assumption as a specific statement. Separate confirmed information from what remains unknown. Identify the work step or decision that depends on it and the possible consequence if it is wrong.
- Name the person authorized to validate it, the evidence needed and the point before which it must be resolved. Hold dependent work when a required condition remains unverified; do not create informal acceptance criteria.
- Track the outcome and its limits: supported, disproved or still unresolved. Carry restrictions into the work package and handoff. Changes to equipment, conditions or instructions may require the basis to be checked again.

Verify It in the Field

Choose a nonhazardous planning example from today's job. Ask what evidence supports the statement now. Locate its source and date, then check whether it covers the actual item and conditions. Record a missing basis honestly rather than filling it from memory.

Ask the responsible technical role to identify the required validation method. Obtain the authorized safe check or review result without moving equipment or defeating protection for this exercise. Record the source, finding, checker, time and any stated limitations.

Trace the outcome into the affected instruction or task record. Have the next person explain what may proceed and what remains held. Check that a pending review is not marked complete merely because someone has been assigned to it.

Stop and reassess

Hold the dependent decision or exposure when evidence is absent, contradictory, outdated or outside its stated scope. Seek the required authority. A crew vote, familiar practice or a successful previous job does not validate today's required condition.

Ask the crew

1. Which statement are we currently accepting without enough evidence?
2. What changes if that statement is wrong?
3. Who can validate it, and where will the result be recorded?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009 Vol. 2, pp. 22–23; OSHA Hazard Identification; HSE Procedures. Full references: webpage..

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

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/validate-assumptions-before-reliance

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