

# Operating Experience: Does the Lesson Fit This Job?

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

## Why this matters

Another crew's experience can reveal a problem before we encounter it. Its solution may not fit our equipment or work. Compare the conditions behind the lesson with today's task, then obtain the review and evidence needed before applying it.

Objective: Screen one lesson for local relevance, identify important differences and confirm what must be reviewed or verified before using it.

## Key hazards or failure points

Copying a fix from different equipment; dismissing a lesson because it happened elsewhere; using an incomplete account; treating a success story as approval; missing limits or later corrections; forwarding private details.

## Practical controls

- Use an authorized, reliable account with its date and relevant context. Separate established findings from open questions. Consider successful practices as well as incidents; remove unnecessary personal, employer or client information before sharing.
- Compare the task, exposure, equipment, environment and control conditions with today's work. State what matches, what differs and what remains unknown. A similar title or job name is not enough to establish applicability.
- Assign the appropriate person to review the proposed local action against current requirements. Preserve existing required safeguards. Communicate the approved decision and its limits before the crew relies on a lesson or changed control.

## Verify It in the Field

Bring one approved learning summary to the briefing. Ask the crew to identify the condition that matters and show its possible counterpart in today's task from safe access. Record the source, date and exact local question without recreating the original event.

Have the responsible reviewer compare important differences with the applicable procedure, equipment instructions or technical criteria. Record the decision basis and unresolved items. Classify the lesson as applicable, requiring further review or not applicable with a reason; uncertainty is not dismissal.

For an approved local change, identify the required check and authorized checker before exposure. Record the actual result, time and remaining restrictions. Ask workers what changed and arrange follow-up for usability; reading or forwarding the alert alone does not implement it.

## Stop and reassess

Hold reliance on a proposed lesson when its source or relevance is unclear, current requirements conflict or the required local control remains unverified. Keep affected exposure protected while the question is reviewed. Do not reproduce an incident or copy an unapproved modification to test the idea.

## Ask the crew

1. Which condition from this experience could also exist here?
2. What difference could make its solution unsuitable?
3. Who will review the local action and verify the result?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009 Vol. 2, pp. 90–92; OSHA Hazard Identification and Hazard Prevention. Full references: webpage..

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

Expanded guidance and separate forms: [toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/operating-experience-lesson-applicability](https://toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/operating-experience-lesson-applicability)

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