

Two Controls, One Weak Point: Trace the Shared Dependency

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Why this matters

Two controls can look separate while relying on the same input or person. Counting them does not establish separate protection. Trace their needs and flag shared dependencies for review before relying on them.

Objective: Identify a possible shared dependency and obtain qualified assessment without defeating or testing safeguards.

Key hazards or failure points

Two displays fed by one source; two checks repeating one assumption; shared support overlooked; a backup unavailable for the same reason as the primary; unauthorized testing to prove independence.

Practical controls

- Choose two controls in the approved task plan and describe the protective function of each. Identify the information, equipment, support and assigned roles they rely on. Keep uncertain connections marked as unknown.
- Use current approved documentation and the responsible technical person to assess a suspected dependency. Do not calculate reliability or declare independence from a crew sketch. A shared input needs assessment; it does not automatically prove failure.
- Maintain all required protection while questions are reviewed. Have any revised arrangement approved, implemented and checked through the governing process. Tell affected workers what restrictions remain and what changes require another review.

Verify It in the Field

On paper, trace each selected control to its documented input or supporting arrangement. Record the exact document and revision. Ask what single missing input might affect both; distinguish a documented connection from a question requiring technical confirmation.

Compare permitted visible identifiers and current records with the documents from an authorized safe position. Do not open equipment, disconnect supplies, suppress warnings or create a failure. Record the actual finding, reviewer and time; route discrepancies to the responsible authority.

Review the authorized disposition with the crew. If a change is required, have designated people perform the prescribed checks against the applicable criteria and record actual results. Confirm restrictions and required release; two signatures or matching readings alone do not demonstrate separate protection.

Stop and reassess

Hold affected reliance when a required control is unavailable, its basis is unknown or a discovered dependency challenges the approved protection. Follow the task's safe-state process and seek the required review. Never remove one safeguard to see whether another catches the problem.

Ask the crew

1. What does each control depend on to work?
2. Which shared input is confirmed, and which remains uncertain?
3. Who can assess the dependency and approve any change?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009 Vol. 1, pp. 2-11-2-12; OSHA Hazard Prevention and Control.

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

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/shared-safety-control-dependencies

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