

Hydrogen Sulfide: Verify the Monitor and Exit Plan

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Why this matters

Hydrogen sulfide can overcome a worker before help arrives. Losing the smell does not mean the gas has gone. A powered-on monitor alone does not prove protection.

Objective: Confirm H₂S detection and withdrawal arrangements before possible exposure.

Key hazards or failure points

Unrecognized gas sources; unreliable readings; failed ventilation; changed conditions; unprotected rescue attempts.

Practical controls

- Have the responsible specialist assess the task, potential releases and required monitoring, ventilation and entry controls. Do not rely on smell.
- Use the specified detector and current testing/calibration procedure. Trained personnel resolve failed or uncertain results before use.
- Know the alarm response, safe withdrawal route and emergency contact. Only designated, trained and properly equipped rescuers enter a hazardous atmosphere.

Verify It in the Field

From a safe location, match detector identity, sensors and test records to the task. A bump test checks response; it does not establish measurement accuracy.

Have the designated person confirm required atmospheric results, monitoring coverage and control performance against the task plan; never enter to obtain proof.

Ask each affected person where to withdraw and how to summon help. Confirm rescue arrangements before any required entry.

Stop and reassess

Withdraw promptly for an alarm, symptoms, monitor failure or lost protection; warn others and summon help from safety. Do not reenter until the required reassessment and authorization are complete.

Ask the crew

1. What could release H₂S here?
2. Which evidence establishes monitor readiness?
3. Where will we go if protection fails?

Use this HOP tool — Pause when unsure: Before exposure, name one monitor or atmosphere uncertainty that would hold the task. Identify the safe waiting location, the person who can resolve it and the evidence needed. Rehearse withdrawal verbally; do not create a gas release or enter a suspect area.

Sources: OSHA H₂S guidance, monitor SHIB, 1926.1204; DOE Vol. 2, pp. 16–17. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/hydrogen-sulfide-monitor-exit-readiness