

Competent Person: Know Who Can Correct the Hazard

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Why this matters

A person's title does not tell the crew which hazards that person is prepared and authorized to address. Before work that requires a competent person, connect the role to the actual task, conditions and required decisions.

Objective: Identify the assigned competent person, the required checks and the route for correcting a hazard.

Key hazards or failure points

An unnamed role; competence assumed from a card; wrong area of expertise; missing corrective authority; old inspection information; changes that require another review.

Practical controls

- The employer must select someone with the hazard-recognition capability and corrective authority required for the task. A course certificate alone does not establish that combination.
- Identify the applicable requirement and who performs each inspection, decision or supervision duty. Competent and qualified persons have different roles; do not assume one designation covers every task.
- Before exposure, obtain the required inspection or determination and communicate restrictions. Agree how workers contact the responsible person and what work must stop if required coverage is unavailable.

Verify It in the Field

Ask the leader to name the person assigned to this operation and identify the relevant inspection or decision. Confirm the person can act on hazards, including arranging prompt correction within the employer's system.

Match the inspection or determination to the actual equipment, location, shift and conditions. Ask what was checked, what limitations remain and what event requires another inspection. A tag alone does not answer those questions.

From a protected position, compare visible conditions with the communicated restrictions. Report a mismatch; workers must not perform specialized inspections beyond their role. Record the responsible person, applicable source, completed check, restrictions and time.

Stop and reassess

Hold affected work for a missing required inspection, unresolved defect, unclear role or unavailable required supervision. Reassess after relevant changes or damage. The responsible person must complete the applicable review and communicate clearance before restart; silence is not approval.

Ask the crew

1. Who is the competent person for this specific operation?
2. What check or decision must be complete before exposure?
3. What change requires another review, and how do we request it?

Before exposure: verify the role, the check and the corrective authority.

Sources: OSHA 1926.32(f), (m); applicable task standard; expanded scaffold references.

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

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.