

Petroleum and Petrochemical Bulletin

Stop Work Authority (SWA)

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Introduction

As safety awareness has improved, the term “Stop Work Authority” (SWA) has become more common. The right to stop work because of an unsafe condition has always existed but it has not always been exercised when necessary and numerous accidents may have been avoided had the SWA been used.

IFIA Member inspectors should apply a Job Safety Analysis (JSA) in all situations, for routine and non-routine work. The JSA can be documented but is more commonly a continuous mental check on the environment and working conditions. If these are not considered to be completely satisfactory, the SWA should be applied.

IFIA Member inspectors carry out the majority of their duties in third party facilities and are therefore subject to the work practices of those facilities. As contractors, rather than employees, there has been a reluctance to exercise SWAs as concerns may not be taken seriously and time pressures, often from ship and shore, tend to prevail.

IFIA Members are encouraged to ensure that their employees are fully aware of their right to exercise a SWA and the procedure to follow.

Exercising a Stop Work Authority

1. Advise affected personnel of your decision and move with them to a safe place.
2. Notify the supervisor at the facility/vessel and the local safety officer.
3. Notify your supervisor/dispatcher/coordinator.
4. The principal(s) should be notified via your office.

While the most important use of the SWA is to prevent incidents, the SWA may also be used where there are deviations from, or misunderstandings of, client orders between the inspector, terminal and vessel.

Repercussions

There are concerns regarding possible repercussions against an IFIA member company following use of a SWA and such instances have been noted. However, with open communications between members' and client safety officers, reprisals should be much less likely.

NOTE

SWAs are not always generated by employees. A terminal or vessel alarm also signals the need to stop work and local alarm protocols must be followed after which steps 3 & 4 above should be taken.

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Revisions/Reaffirmations

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