Task-Change Transition: Whenever a Job Step Changes, Hazards Change Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Most workplace accidents don’t happen during something brand new. They happen in the gap between one task step and the next, when a worker’s brain is still halfway through the last job while their hands are starting the next one. Every time a job step changes, the hazard picture changes with it. Different tools, different materials, different energy sources, different risks. But our brains don’t always catch up in time, and that’s the window where things go wrong.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

The hazard here isn’t usually in the task itself. It’s in the transition.

Carrying the Wrong Mindset Forward

You spent the last 20 minutes doing something that needed one set of precautions. The next step needs a completely different approach, but your instincts are still running on the old script. You handle the new step the way you handled the old one, and that’s exactly how the wrong move gets made.

Skipping Controls That Belong to the New Step

Every task step can have its own lockout requirements, PPE, or equipment configuration. If you jump in without checking what this step requires, you might start unprotected without realizing you’re missing anything at all.

Losing Your Footing During the Switch

Transitions scatter attention. You're thinking about what you just finished, what's coming next, and what's going on around you. That mental gap is when slips, trips, and unexpected contacts are most likely to happen. Three specific moments to watch:

- Stepping around materials or tools left over from the previous step
- Reaching for equipment without checking if it's still in the right position or configuration
- Moving between work areas without checking the path for new obstructions

Poor Handoffs Between Workers

When one person hands a task off to another mid-step, hazard information gets lost in the transfer. The incoming worker may not know what condition things are in, what's been done, or what the last step left behind.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Transitions are predictable. Predictable hazards can be controlled. The fix isn't complicated, but it has to be intentional.

Pause Before You Start the Next Step

Before moving on, take five seconds. Ask yourself: what's different now? New materials? New position? New energy source? You don't need a meeting. You need a breath and a mental reset. Those five seconds are the cheapest safety habit on the job.

Check What This Step Actually Requires

Don't assume the controls from the last step carry over. Before you start, confirm:

- What PPE does this step require? Is it different from what I was just wearing?
- Is the equipment in the right configuration for this step, or does it need to be adjusted?

- Are there any energy sources that need to be isolated or verified before I begin?

Slow Down at the Transition Point

Speed comes after you've confirmed the setup is right. Not before. The time you save by rushing a transition is almost never worth what you risk by missing something. Slow down, reset, then go.

Brief Every Handoff Like It Matters

If you're handing a task off to someone else, give them a real brief: where you left off, what's still in play, and what hazards apply to the next step. 'It's all good' is not a handoff. It's an assumption passed from one person to another.

Watch for Teammates Who Are Mid-Transition

You're not the only one switching tasks. Keep an eye out for coworkers who are between steps and may not be fully tuned in to what's around them. A quick heads-up in the right moment can make a real difference.

FINAL WORD

Every step change is a moment of real risk. The good news is it's also a moment you can see coming. Build the five-second reset into your routine, keep your handoffs honest, and watch out for the people working beside you.