Task-Change Transition: Whenever a Job Step Changes, Hazards Change Stats and Facts

FACTS

- **New Step, New Risk:** Each time a job step changes — a different tool, position, or material — the hazard profile changes with it. A worker focused on completing the previous step may not pause to assess what the next one requires.
- **Complacency at Transition Points:** Familiarity with a job can cause workers to move through transitions automatically, without stopping to recognize what is different this time.
- **Unplanned Changes Are Most Dangerous:** When a task changes unexpectedly — due to equipment failure or a shift in conditions — workers have the least preparation and the highest exposure to unrecognized hazards.
- **PPE Requirements Can Change Mid-Task:** A new job step may require different gloves, eye protection, or fall arrest equipment. Moving forward without reassessing PPE needs leaves a worker unprotected.
- **Communication Gaps at Handoffs:** When one worker hands a task to another mid-job, the incoming worker may not be aware of hazards already encountered or conditions that have changed.
- **Distractions Amplify Transition Risk:** A worker interrupted and then asked to resume or redirect is at elevated risk. The mental reset required to safely transition between steps is disrupted.
- **The Last Step Is Not the Safest:** Workers often let their guard down as a task nears completion. Injuries during cleanup, shutdown, and equipment restoration are more common than most expect.

STATS

- Over 2023–2024, contact incidents led all U.S. DAFW categories with 499,270 cases, followed by overexertion with 492,140 cases and falls with 479,480 – all injury types commonly triggered at task transition points, according to the National Safety Council.
- Between 80 and 90 percent of serious workplace injuries are attributed to human error – a category that includes failures to recognize new hazards when job steps change.
- There were 5,070 fatal work injuries in the U.S. in 2024, with contact with objects, falls, and overexertion among the leading fatal event categories, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- In 2023, over 1.5 million recorded workplace injuries and illnesses submitted to OSHA resulted in more than 18.5 million days away from work.
- In Canada, 348,747 lost-time injury claims were accepted in 2022, according to the Association of Workers’ Compensation Boards of Canada.