Toolbox Talk - Using Safety Indicators to Learn

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v2.0 | October 13, 2026 | 5–10 minutes plus field checks

What and why

A safety indicator is information used to monitor a condition or outcome and guide a response. A green dashboard can hide weak controls when it counts activity without examining results.

Objective: Explain what one indicator shows, what it misses and what field evidence is needed.

When and where

When reviewing trends, choosing improvement priorities or evaluating a change. At team reviews, planning meetings and the work locations represented by the data.

How to use it

- Define the question, data source, period and what is included or excluded.
- Compare outcomes with information about preparation and control condition. Ask workers what the numbers miss.
- Investigate the signal and record a response; use appropriate analytical expertise for trend claims.

Verify It in the Field

Trace a selected record to actual work and current control evidence. Dashboard status cannot release a task.

Paper practice: all corrective actions say closed, but one has no effectiveness result. Identify the limitation.

Propose a follow-up that studies whether the correction works, not just whether a form was filed.

Failure points and stop triggers

Changing definitions; missing context; rewarding silence; treating a single point as a trend. Do not rely on data with unclear definitions or missing records. Hold work independently when required protection is unverified.

Toolbox talk questions

1. What does this number leave out?

2. Could our target discourage reporting?

3. Which field evidence would challenge the dashboard?

Use the separate supervisor field check and attendance sheet. Practice is not qualification or work authorization.

Source: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2, printed pp. 77–79. References and task-specific limits on the webpage.

Next step: Apply this skill to one step on the free JHA/JSA field-verification worksheet.

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/safety-indicators-field-evidence

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