Toolbox Talk - Choosing the Right Procedure Branch

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

What and why

Branch selection matches verified conditions with the entry requirements of the current procedure. A familiar symptom can lead to the wrong response when today's conditions differ. Before choosing a branch in an instruction, establish what makes that branch applicable.

Objective: Use evidence of actual conditions to select an authorized procedure branch, and refer an unresolved choice for review.

When and where

At an if-then decision, after changed conditions or whenever more than one response seems plausible. Where the controlled instruction and required evidence are available before action.

How to use it

- Read the complete entry conditions, exceptions and prerequisites. Do not substitute a remembered shortcut.
- Establish each required fact through the approved safe method. Missing information is unknown, not evidence of the opposite.
- Refer ambiguous choices to the authorized owner. Communicate the approved branch and its basis before proceeding.

Verify It in the Field

Use a paper rule: release only if identity AND review status match. Provide one matching fact and one unknown; the correct response is HOLD.

For actual work, compare all entry conditions with current evidence from authorized checks. Record criterion, item, result and time.

Ask another participant to explain what makes the branch applicable and what would invalidate it. Resolve differences before required release.

Failure points and stop triggers

Similar symptoms with different causes; a remembered shortcut; an unverified starting condition; one clue treated as the whole picture; a branch chosen to keep work moving. Hold when a prerequisite is unknown, the evidence supports conflicting branches or the instruction does not cover the observed condition. Maintain required protection and obtain authorized resolution.

Toolbox talk questions

1. What exact condition makes this branch applicable?

2. Which required fact is still unknown?

3. What change would invalidate this selection?

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

Source: DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 1, printed pp. 2-23–2-25. 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/procedure-branch-entry-conditions

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