Toolbox Talk - Shared Dependencies Between Controls

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

What and why

Dependency tracing asks whether different controls rely on the same information, support or action. Two controls can look separate while relying on the same input or person. Counting them does not establish separate protection.

Objective: Identify a possible shared dependency and obtain qualified assessment without defeating or testing safeguards.

When and where

During planning or when a change may affect more than one protective measure. On approved plans and records, with safe observation and specialist review as needed.

How to use it

- Name each control’s function and supporting inputs. Mark uncertain connections as questions.
- Ask the responsible technical person to assess suspected dependencies against current documentation. A sketch cannot establish independence.
- Maintain required protection during review. Implement changes only through the governing approval and verification process.

Verify It in the Field

Draw two fictional review boxes that both copy one source list. Ask what happens if that list is wrong; do not calculate a failure probability.

Trace real documented inputs and permitted visible identifiers. Record evidence and unknowns without opening equipment or disabling protection.

Review the authorized disposition and prescribed check results. Matching displays or two signatures alone do not prove separate protection.

Failure points and stop triggers

Two displays fed by one source; two checks repeating one assumption; shared support overlooked; a backup unavailable for the same reason as the primary; unauthorized testing to prove independence. Hold affected reliance when a required control is unavailable, its basis is unknown or a discovered dependency challenges the approved protection. Follow the task’s safe-state process and seek the required review.

Toolbox talk questions

1. What does each control depend on to work?

2. Which shared input is confirmed, and which remains uncertain?

3. Who can assess the dependency and approve any change?

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. 2-11–2-12. 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/shared-safety-control-dependencies

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