



OCTOBER 2023

TOOLBOX TALKS

Tragedy can be one unasked question away

Having confidence that the action you're about to take will not result in an injury or incident does not happen by happenstance. The right amount of planning and experience in performing the task or activity can go a long way to ensure safe outcomes, but unfortunately in many cases that may not be enough; having a questioning attitude to ask the right questions to uncover hidden risks are key.

To have a questioning attitude means analyzing workplace situations, identifying hazards or potential hazards, before acting or making a decision. "Stop Work Authority" doesn't just mean stopping when a hazard has been positively identified, it can also mean stopping a task when there is doubt among the team members, stopping is encouraged to ask questions to gain full clarity. Additionally, asking questions is good for the crew; it signals that no one individual has all of the answers to identified issues.

Having a questioning attitude help to identify:

- Hazards in the work area
- Hazards within the procedure(s)
- Critical steps with single layers of defense
- Error likely situations or scenarios



Here is an example of how a questioning attitude likely prevented a more serious incident from occurring within the wind industry:

A team member who was new to both the crew and industry was asked to assist two other experienced team members to lower tools and equipment down the WTG



utilizing a friction break device. The two experienced team members were responsible for setting up the lowering system and all of it's components, as the newer team member was observing. The new team member had not observed this task and became concerned about the process and began asking questions for clarity.

- How do we know there isn't anyone below – how do we protect them if something falls?
- How does the friction break work?
- What happens if we lose control of the rope?
- Why is there a back-up knot tied under the bowline knot?

Through asking these questions, it was found that there was not an established process to ensure no team members were below the lowered loads, time was taken to create that plan. There was no prior consideration for planning "worst case scenario" like a free falling load, steps were taken to create capacity to fail safely. And finally, the friction break was incorrectly set, and without the question being asked, it is likely that once the load became free hanging control would have been lost resulting in a free falling load.

Having a questioning attitude, even with sufficient experience, can prevent the most serious of outcomes for our team members and workplaces.

Do you feel you have a questioning attitude? Why or why not?

What are some limitations to asking questions?

