

Knowing Your Limits

A Practical Guide for Safer Decisions

THREE SIMPLE STEPS TO AVOID TROUBLE

In building safety, issues can arise when decisions are made beyond an individual's competence or authority. Most failures start with someone deciding to make a decision they weren't equipped to. The simple process below provides a structure to pause, assess, and make informed decisions whenever you're asked to give a judgement, alter materials within a system, or assume responsibility.



1 PAUSE

Before acting, stop and give yourself space to think.

ASK YOURSELF:

What exactly is being asked of me?

What decision or action is required?

Does this fall under my usual responsibilities?

WHY IT MATTERS:

Rushing leads to mistakes. Pausing allows you to spot a hazard and the subsequent risk before you're already committed.

2 CONSIDER COMPETENCE

Honestly assess whether you have:

The knowledge...

The experience...

The skills...

The legal authority...

...to make the decision safely.

ASK YOURSELF:

Am I competent to do this myself?

Do I need guidance, supervision, or a specialist?

Would proceeding put people or the organisation at risk?

TIP!

Competence is not just training—it's Skills, Knowledge, Experience and Behaviours.

3 REACT ACCORDINGLY

Choose the right response based on your self-assessment:

Proceed if you are clearly competent.

Escalate if it requires specialist input or a higher duty holder.

Refuse if it is outside your competence or would create risk.

Record your decision where appropriate for accountability.

Good reactions prevent bad outcomes.

EXAMPLE SITUATION—Considering using a product you're unfamiliar with?

> PAUSE > CHECK COMPETENCE > REQUEST GUIDANCE .