

Pause and plan

Giving permission to slow down

10 seconds now prevents weeks off later.

The risk

When work feels urgent, kaimahi (workers) may rush straight into tasks. Rushing leads to kaimahi (workers) reverting to ingrained habits and familiar ways of working, rather than stopping to think. This increases the likelihood that hazards are missed, shortcuts are taken or the wrong equipment or technique is used, which all significantly increase the risk of injury.

Why this matters

Pausing for just 10 seconds can be the difference between staying well and suffering an injury that takes weeks to recover from. When leaders actively give permission to slow down they reinforce that safety and wellbeing matter more than speed, and that kaimahi (workers) will be supported when they choose to pause and plan and speak up.

Your role as a leader

Your actions and language set the tone. Kaimahi (workers) take cues from you about whether it is truly acceptable to stop, reassess or ask for help. By modelling and encouraging kaimahi (workers) to pause and plan, and backing people when they escalate concerns, you make it safe for others to do the same.

What this looks like in practice:

- Lead kōrero (conversations) with kaimahi (workers) about when to pause and plan.
- Encourage use of the **LITE** (Load, Individual, Task, Environment) check before tasks.
- Model **LITE** and pause and plan in your own mahi (work).
- Respond positively when someone stops or escalates.
- Start by asking 'Are you ok?' rather than jumping straight to 'What happened?'.
- Prioritise safe progress over speed.

Barrier busting

Here are some common barriers that stop kaimahi (workers) from slowing down and what you as a leader can remove:

- **Perceived time pressure:** be explicit that taking 10 seconds to pause is expected, even when busy.
- **Fear of holding others up:** reinforce that safety comes before keeping things moving.
- **Worry about being judged:** thank people who pause, plan or speak up.
- **Unclear support pathways:** make it clear who kaimahi (workers) can escalate issues to and that leaders will back them.
- **Normalised rushing:** challenge language like 'just get it done' and replace it with 'let's pause and plan'.

Ask the team

Use these questions to open up a **kōrero** (conversation) about what your team is really experiencing:

1. When does work feel most rushed for you and what usually pushes you to keep going instead of pausing and planning?
2. What would make it easier for you to slow down or stop a task when something doesn't feel right?

Commitment

Complete this commitment with your team or with individuals eg, **'This week I/we will pause and plan before every high-risk task, even when we're under pressure'**.

This week I/we will...



Continue the kōrero (conversation):

Follow up regularly to focus on pausing by asking curious questions such as **'When did you pause and plan today?'**.



Other resources

- **Pause and plan** quick reference guide
- **Pause and plan** micro card
- **Move Well: Skills for kaimahi** elearning
 - Moving techniques
 - Holistic wellbeing
 - Using equipment
- **Move Well: Focus on leaders** elearning
 - Your role
 - Vision and support
 - Applying the learning - coaching guide