



Trust Your Gut

Real-World Example

Last spring at a Beaumont, Texas manufacturing facility, an ironworker named Carla was helping guide a 2-ton valve assembly into place. As the rigging team started to hoist, Carla felt a sudden, sharp knot in her stomach. Nothing looked wrong on the surface. Slings were rated and tag lines were clear. But the feeling would not fade. She raised her hand, called “Pause!”, and asked the rigger to double-check the shackles. Within moments they found a hairline crack in one shackle pin. Swapping it out added five minutes to the job and prevented what could have been a catastrophic drop. Carla’s quick pause protected the crew and the schedule.

Why Your Body Sends “Gut” Warnings

- **Gut-brain link:** Your digestive system carries millions of nerve cells. When your brain spots something out of place, it may trigger stomach twinges, nausea, or that unmistakable “something’s wrong” feeling.
- **Subconscious scanning:** While you focus on your task, your brain is still tracking sights, sounds, and movements in the background. It often notices subtle changes before you can label them.

How to Act on a Gut Feeling

1. **Stop and speak up.** If a feeling of danger hits, whether during energy isolation, overhead lifts, or any other task, call an immediate pause.
2. **Share what you sense.** Tell the team exactly what you felt and what area or equipment concerns you. Even saying “I can’t explain it yet, but something seems off with that anchor bolt” is enough to start the check.
3. **Assess together.** Inspect rigging, verify isolation points, re-check permits, or bring in supervision. Two sets of eyes are better than one gut feeling alone.
4. **Own the outcome.** If you ignore the warning and an incident follows, that choice is partly on you. Trusting your gut protects everyone.

When You Are Working Solo

- Step back to a safe distance.
- Scan the entire scene slowly, looking for changes, loose parts, or energy sources you may have overlooked.
- Restart only when you are confident the hazard is gone.

Use Your Stop-Work Authority

Our Good Catch (Stop-Work) policy is the final shield between hazards and harm. Whether the threat is obvious or only suspected, you have full backing to halt the job. Afterward, record the event in a **Good Catch** form so others can learn from your instincts.

Good Catch Form: <https://iws.support/good-catches>

Takeaway

Intuition improves with practice. Pay attention to physical cues like stomach knots, sudden chills, or unexplained anxiety. Those signals are hard-wired alarms designed to keep you alive. Listen, pause, and act. Your crew is counting on it.

Stay alert! Trust your gut! Work safe!