

Accident Investigation

The purpose of an accident investigation is to identify the causes of the accident, in order to prevent reoccurrence. Every accident requires some form of investigation. “Near-miss” accidents are equally important and should be investigated.

Accident investigation is important to establish the facts to prevent future accidents. The goal is to correct conditions or practices that led to the accident or near miss, and obtain information.

Remember: Details, Details, Details...

WHO?

WHAT?

WHERE?

WHEN?

WHY?

HOW?

Accident Investigation Process

STEPS TO FOLLOW

- The injured employee's supervisor should conduct the accident investigation.
- Preserve the scene. Do not move key materials/elements involved in the accident until the investigation has been completed.
- Conduct interviews with the injured worker and any witnesses or involved contractors.
- Take notes and be specific.
- Do not editorialize or interpret remarks, just record the facts ("Employee states").

ANALYZE THE DATA

- Determine the root cause(s) of the accident, identifying unsafe acts and conditions
- Determine the required action(s) to be taken to prevent future accidents.

RETAIN KEY INFORMATION

- File reports, witness statements, take photographs of the accident scene, etc.
- Keep key accident elements (i.e., broken tools, scaffold boards, etc.) as evidence.
- Follow up.
 - ◆ Assign responsibilities for implementation of corrective measures.
 - ◆ Establish target dates and follow up on corrective actions.

Accident Investigation Guidelines

Description of Injury or Illness

What kind of injury was it (cut, scrape, etc.)? Specific information (i.e. type of injury and part of body affected) will be essential to identify problem areas and eliminate the hazard

Specific information regarding medical treatment or first aid should be provided in the claims filing process.

Description of Accident

Look for unusual items found at the accident scene, (broken tools, spilled oil/ liquid, poor lighting, lack of machine guards, unused safety equipment.) Photographs provide excellent documentation.

Some questions to ask include: Was the employee performing an assigned duty when injured? Was the employee in an unauthorized area?

Do not draw conclusions or speculate who is at fault until you obtain the facts. Concentrate on the facts. The investigation should be non-punitive to ensure the uninhibited cooperation of the injured employee and co-workers. Interviews should be conducted near the scene of the accident as soon as possible. Encourage the injured employee and witnesses to describe the incident in his/her own words. Employees should understand that cooperation with investigations is expected. Explain that your goal is to prevent future injuries. Ask only open-ended questions (i.e. What did you see?)

Analysis

Review all the accumulated data. The investigation will begin to show that each and every accident is the result of a series of events, and not the result of an isolated event. Remember, unsafe acts may be the result of improper training, lack of appropriate supervision, or poorly designed job procedures. Review past accident records, particularly ones that are similar to this accident, to determine if any possible trends are developing. List possible causes in order of importance and probability.

Preventative and/or Corrective Action

An accident represents the ultimate breakdown in the system, and thus the reduction or elimination of a recurrence is paramount.

Assign responsibility to those who must implement the corrective measures. Any corrective action, whether immediate or long term, must be attainable. Management must actively support the implementation of the solution. Solutions must address the primary and secondary causes of the accident. Time must be allowed to make necessary changes, and completion dates should be established and met.

Primary Causes of Accidents

The unsafe acts and unsafe conditions listed below are given for the purpose of assisting the supervisor in preparing the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report Form.

Unsafe Acts (Human Failure)

- Using improper lifting techniques.
- Working or moving dangerous equipment needlessly (cleaning, oiling, adjusting, etc.).
- Failure to wear personal protective equipment (eye protection, etc.).
- Wearing unsafe clothing (high heels, loose clothing, etc.).
- Failure to secure or warn (failure to lock, block, fasten, give warning, etc.).
- Horseplay (distracting, teasing, quarreling, joking, etc.).
- Improper use of equipment (substituting, overloading, etc.).
- Improper use of hands, feet (gripping insecurely, using hands instead of tools, etc.).
- Unsafe foot placement (walking backwards, etc.).
- By-passing safety devices (blocking, disconnecting, circumventing, etc.).
- Unsafe speed (too fast, too slow, running, throwing, shortcutting, etc.).
- Unsafe position, posture (unsafe entering, riding, not standing in the clear, etc.).
- Driving errors (on public roads - speeding, tailgating, etc.).
- Unsafe placing, mixing, combining, etc. (wrong parking, placement of objects, etc.).
- Using unsafe equipment (tagged or noticeably defective, etc.).

Unsafe Conditions (Mechanical Failure)

- Defective (unsafe design, construction, or broken, worn, etc.).
- Unsafe clothing (or lack of personal protective equipment).
- Inside environment unsafe (noise, light, space, ventilation).
- Hazardous method (accepted but avoidable).
- Hazardous arrangements (piling, storing, unsecured).
- Unsafe guarding (lack of, poor design, labels, etc.).
- Outside environment unsafe (lighting, working/walking surfaces, inclement weather, etc.).
- Public hazards (passengers, traffic, etc.).