

Incident Investigation & Near Miss Procedures



OSHA strongly encourages employers to investigate all incidents in which a worker was hurt, as well as close calls (sometimes called "near misses"), in which a worker might have been hurt if the circumstances had been slightly different.

In the past, the term "accident" was often used when referring to an unplanned, unwanted event. To many, "accident" suggests an event that was random, and could not have been prevented. Since nearly all worksite fatalities, injuries, and illnesses are preventable, OSHA suggests using the term "incident" investigation.

Definitions

- **Accident:** A sudden event that is not planned or intended that may result in illness, injury, or damage
- **Incident:** An *unplanned, undesired* event that hinders completion of a task and may cause injury, illness, or property damage, or some combination of all three in varying degrees from minor to catastrophic.
- **Near Miss:** A close call; an accident that was just barely avoided

Incident Investigation

1. The employee will complete the Employee Section of the Incident Report and give it to their supervisor immediately for all workplace accidents, injuries, and illnesses.
2. The incident investigation team will be responsible for investigating the incident and completing the Supervisor's Investigation Section of the Incident Report. The incident investigation team will attempt to determine the root cause(s) of the incident from the information gathered and take corrective action immediately, if necessary.
3. The Incident Report will be forwarded immediately to the Safety Coordinator, safety committee, or designated personnel for review.
4. If applicable, the safety committee will review all incident reports and determine appropriate corrective action to prevent recurrence.
 - a. The Safety Coordinator will determine if the incident was caused by insufficient policy or by not complying with existing policy and will also determine if training was adequate.
5. The Incident Report will be maintained by the Safety Coordinator and kept available for management review. Documentation of corrective actions will also be kept available for review.

Near Miss Procedures

Employers should develop near miss procedures used to identify and report unsafe conditions and acts that have the potential to result in accidents, injuries, illnesses, or property damage if corrective action is not taken.

1. A Safety Concern Report is to be completed by the employee when:
 - a. they are involved in or a witness to a close call resulting in no damage or personal injury, but where there was potential for both to occur; or
 - b. when an employee has identified an unsafe condition or hazard
2. The employee, when possible, should fill out what corrective action was taken.
 - a. Example: Hazard: Broken rung on ladder. Corrective Action Taken: Tagged ladder as "Broken – Do Not Use" and notified supervisor.
3. The Safety Concern Report will be given to the supervisor or Safety Coordinator for investigation. They will attempt to determine the cause of the incident or hazard and take corrective action immediately, if necessary.

4. The Safety Concern Report will be forwarded to the Safety Coordinator for review to determine if appropriate corrective action was taken to prevent recurrence.

Corrective Action & Follow Up

1. All near misses and accident investigations will be tracked until corrective actions are complete.
2. Corrective actions will be evaluated for effectiveness after full implementation

Additional Resources

To assist employers and workers in conducting effective incident investigations, and to develop corrective action plans, the following resources can help:

- National Safety Council. [How to conduct an incident investigation](#) (PDF*). (2014). This four-page guidance document, developed by the [OSHA/NSC National Alliance](#), provides brief guidance on conducting an incident investigation.
- Washington State Department of Labor & Industries. [Accident Investigation Basics](#). (2009). This PowerPoint-based online training module provides an overview on conducting root-cause workplace incident investigations