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INJURY REPORTING



INJURY AND ILLNESS REPORTING

It's important that employers know when a worker has been injured for several reasons.

First, if you don't know when such an injury occurs, you can't take the necessary steps to prevent similar injuries.

Second, you may need to report certain injuries, especially serious ones, to your jurisdiction's OHS regulator and/or the workers' comp board.

So it is important to make sure that workers know that they're required to report injuries to a supervisor, OHS coordinator or other designated individual.

This report on injury/illness reporting highlights some of the hurdles you may face when dealing with injury or illness reporting. Including steps to help you overcome reluctance and how to effectively implement incident notification processes.



4 STEPS TO IMPROVING YOUR INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Defining The Problem

The goal of an incident investigation is to uncover what happened and why it happened so the right set of corrective actions can be taken. A large part of the “WHAT” and the “WHY” will come from victim and witness interviews. The depth and quality of the information you get during those interviews has a lot to do with how you are as interviewer.

Communication is a large part of your role as a supervisor or safety person, but it’s not necessarily something you are taught to do or feel comfortable doing. The good news is picking up just a few key

communication strategies can make a big difference. Practicing active listening is one way you can improve your interviewing technique and your communication skills overall. Here are four steps to help you become a more active listener.

Step 1 - Tune In:

- Don’t get caught up thinking about what you’re going to ask next, or how you’re going to reply. In other words, pay attention, or you’ll miss what’s being said. Nod your head, smile when appropriate, keep your posture relaxed and open.
- Listen differently. Don’t just listen to the words being spoken, be aware

of the interviewee’s tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language.

- Don’t interrupt. Make a quick note of the thought and come back to it when it’s your turn to speak.

Step 2 - Show You’re Listening

- Your body language can say a lot to the victims and witnesses. If you’re sitting with your arms folded across your chest and frowning, shaking your head, or even rolling your eyes, these are not signals that say you are someone to trust and confide in.
- Nod your head, smile when appropriate, keep

- your posture relaxed and open.
- Use encouraging words such as yes, mm hmm, or go on.

Step 3 - Repeat And Confirm

- Check for understanding by repeating and summarizing, in your own words, what the interviewee said.
- Ask questions to clarify important points and anything you're not sure you understand. "What do you mean when you say..." or "Can you tell me more about..."
- Avoid questions with a simple yes or no answer. Instead opt for open-ended questions such as, "Tell me what you heard

- before the incident occurred." your next question is or what you

Step 4 - Thoughtful Follow Up

Your body language can say a lot to the victims and witnesses. If you're sitting with your arms folded across your chest and frowning, shaking your head, or even a rolling your eyes, these are not signals that say you are someone to trust and confide in.

- Continue to ask clarifying questions and answer their questions.
- Explain to them any relevant next steps in the interview and

- investigation process.
- Summarize the conversation and ask if the interviewee if they have additional comments.

Bottom Line

Active listening is about putting distractions aside and focusing on the person you are talking to, or, in the case of an incident investigation, the person you are interviewing. It takes some practice, but even using a few of the suggestions we just covered (i.e. asking open-ended questions and not interrupting) can have a positive impact on the interviewing process and your communication skills.

9 Common Pitfalls To Avoid When Investigating Workplace Violence

Always make sure you have adequate procedures in place for investigating reports of workplace violence and resolving situations of violence. You also need to provide appropriate support to workers who are the victims of workplace violence or threats, including recommending that they consult a health professional for referral or treatment if they suffer any injuries or adverse symptoms. The best prevention of workplace violence is adequate safety training, but in the event of an incident, make sure to avoid these following common investigation errors.

See page 8 for 9 traps to avoid when investigating workplace violence.



HOW TO OVERCOME RELUCTANCE TO REPORT

Getting employees to report near misses is a challenge. Employees often question the value of reporting what they've seen.

However, there's an effective technique to overcome reluctance: Analogize near misses at work to incidents at home. Since many workers are parents—and all of them were once children—this casts the subject in a light to which they can readily relate. Here's one way to use the technique.

Near Misses Happen at Work and Home

A Near Miss is an undesired event that, under slightly different circumstances, could have resulted in harm to people or damage to property, materials or the environment. Proper reporting of Near Misses is essential and the investigation that follows is for the purpose of training, educating and preventing future incidents or injury.

Near Miss is a term used by occupational health and safety professionals. But incidents also take place outside the workplace. Parents frequently handle Near Miss situations at home. Here's a tale of a domestic near miss to illustrate how this

works.

The Near Miss Occurs

You tell your 16-year-old son (let's call him Junior) to wash the dishes. Junior drops a carving knife while loading the dishwasher. The knife falls violently to the ground and lands blade-down on the kitchen floor, just missing the foot of Junior's little sister, Suzie, by a few centimeters.

That is a Near Miss. As a parent, you will want to know what happened so you can take steps to ensure it doesn't happen again. But will Junior or Suzie tell you about the incident?

“ Many employees fear that coming forward with a report will cause trouble and lead to punishment. Making it challenging for employers to receive valuable near miss information.

”

Junior and Suzie Must Decide Whether to Report it

It depends. Through life experience and social conditioning, children are encouraged not to report situations that cast a “supposedly” negative light on themselves or anyone else. And, in many families, there’s an unwritten code among siblings to keep misbehavior a secret and not “tattle tale to mom and dad.”

The motivation for such behavior is to protect oneself and one’s siblings from punishment. But there are ways to defuse this. One way is to persuade your children to always tell the truth and promise they won’t be punished for doing so.

The Happy Ending

Let’s say Junior does in fact come forward and tell you what happened. Like a good parent should, you investigate the incident and assess the risk of a recurrence. As a result, you discover that Junior:

Always rushes to load the dishwasher (1st mistake); and

Grabs knives by the blade instead of the handle (2nd mistake).

But now that you know what’s going on, you are in a position to educate Junior on the dangers of always being in a rush and the proper handling of knives. The problem is resolved and dishwasher loading becomes safer at your home.

The Unhappy Ending

Junior and Suzie don’t report the incident. So you have no reason to suspect that Junior is rushing to load the dishwasher and handling knives by the blade. And since no injuries have occurred, the improper behavior is reinforced. So it’s repeated.

Two weeks later, Junior asks permission to go out with his buddies on Friday night. Your response: “Okay, but only after you load that dishwasher.” Junior accepts the deal but is in an even bigger hurry than usual to complete his chore. He distractedly grabs a steak knife by the blade and slices open his hand.

This accident could have been avoided. But it wasn’t because you didn’t know about Junior’s dangerous loading techniques until after an injury occurred. The Near Miss, in other words, represented an opportunity to fix the problem before it led to an injury. Unfortunately, that opportunity was lost since the Near Miss wasn’t reported.

Bottom Line

This is simple stuff. But it’s surprising how placing the importance of Near Miss reporting in the context of the home situation drives home the message to employees. The technique has a secondary benefit: In addition to encourages the reporting of Near Misses, it also enables parents to consciously build on the practice at home and thus eliminate dangers that threaten their families. So give it a try.



THE WHO/WHAT/WHERE/WHEN/HOW OF INCIDENT NOTIFICATION

What's at stake

While prevention is the paramount goal, effective incident response is critical to OHS compliance. The starting point is to provide proper and timely notification of health and safety incidents that occur in your workplace. Unfortunately, that's not as simple as it sounds. Incident notification, aka, reporting rules are complicated and vary significantly by jurisdiction. Here's what you need to know to ensure compliance, no matter which part of the country you're in.

Layers Of Incident Notification

Incident reporting is a layered process that begins with immediate notification, i.e., within 24 hours of occurrence, and continues with post-investigation notification 3 to 5 days later. Incidents may also trigger separate notification requirements under workers' comp laws. As safety coordinator, you need to keep all these layers distinct and not let them bleed into each other so you know exactly where you are in the notification continuum and comply with what's required at that particular stage.

What This Analysis Covers

This analysis focuses on layer 1, immediate notification. OHSI will break down the rules governing the other 2 layers in separate stories.

Immediate Notification Requirements

Immediate notification is all about letting the proper parties know that a reportable incident has occurred at your workplace and furnish them the preliminary information they need to decide what to do about it, e.g., by initiating (or in the case of the JHSC/HSR, participating in) an investigation.

Who

The employer or prime contractor in charge of safety is responsible for providing immediate notification of incidents occurring at the site. Such notification must be provided to:

- The government agency in charge of OHS enforcement (all jurisdictions); and
- The workplace joint health and safety committee (JHSC) or health and safety representative (HSR) in ON, SK, QC, the 4 Maritime Provinces and NT and NU. (In SK, notification must be made to the JHSC co-chairs.)

What

The most critical part of incident notification compliance is knowing which incidents you do and don't have to report. Explanation: The whole point of making employers report incidents is to provide the transparency the OHS system needs to function effectively. Government OHS agencies need to know when

workplace incidents occur so they can respond and carry out their enforcement functions in a timely fashion. Other stakeholders like the JHSC and HSR also need to be informed of incidents so they can carry out their health and safety responsibilities under the internal responsibility system, e.g., initiate or participate in an internal investigation.

By the same token, incident reporting is not only burdensome but legally risky to employers to the extent it requires them to call attention to potential breakdowns in their own OHS programs. OHS laws are designed to balance these concerns by requiring employers to provide notification only of significant incidents. As a result, each jurisdiction has predesignated its own set of incidents triggering the obligation to report.

When The Triggers Overlap

For an incident to be reportable, it must occur in the workplace and either:

- Occur in the workplace; and
- Result in death or serious injury; and/or

- Involve a catastrophic event like a crane collapse, fire or explosion that would normally be expected to cause serious injury or death even if it didn't actually lead to such results in the particular incident, e.g., due to preventive measures or just dumb luck.

When The Triggers Differ

Definitions of serious injury and catastrophic incident triggering the duty to notify differ by jurisdiction, with the key differences affecting:

Victim's identity: In most jurisdictions, the duty to notify of serious injury or death is triggered only if the victim is a "worker" or "employee." Exception: In On, NL and the 3 territories, serious injury/death to any person is reportable.

Near misses: A near miss, i.e., incident that could and should have been serious but didn't actually result in injuries, is reportable if it's one of the catastrophic events listed in the OHS laws as requiring immediate notification. But other near misses are not reportable; stated differently, incidents

are reportable only if they result in actual serious injury or death. Exception: In NL and PEI, incidents are reportable if they cause or had the potential to cause serious injury or death. In SK, incidents are reportable if they caused or had the potential to cause a worker's death.

When

You must provide notification "immediately" or "as soon as reasonably practicable" after the incident occurs. Fed, NS, PEI and QC spell out what the other jurisdictions basically imply, i.e., that notice must be provided no later than 24 hours.

How

Notification must be

provided directly and via the fastest means available—phone, in-person or online on the agency's website for reporting incidents. Compliance Pointers:

- Notification via snail mail is not acceptable;
- In QC, notification must be in writing;
- In SK, NT and NU, notification must be by phone and in writing.

How Much

The final challenge is determining which information to include in your incident notification. Keep in mind that immediate notification is preliminary; its objective is to break news, not break down causes. Accordingly, all you're expected to

provide at this point is very basic information about the incident like:

- Victims' names;
- Types of injuries suffered;
- The prime contractor or controlling employer at the site or a contact;
- A very basic description of the incident; and
- In some jurisdictions, a very basic description of its cause.

Rule Of Thumb

Provide only the information that's legally required for immediate notification and not a jot more. Be careful not to confuse immediate notification with the more detailed incident reporting required a few days later after you've had a chance to investigate the incident.

9 Common Pitfalls To Avoid When Investigating Workplace Violence

- Trap #1 - Waiting Too Long to Investigate
- Trap #2 - Relying on a Biased or Incompetent Investigator
- Trap #3 - Not Getting both sides of the Story
- Trap #4 - Not Interviewing Third Parties
- Trap #5 - Failing to Gather All Relevant Information
- Trap #6 - Asking "Leading" Questions
- Trap #7 - Interviewing Witnesses in the Presence of Each Other
- Trap #8 - Not Following Company Policy and Procedure
- Trap #9 - Not Documenting the Investigation Properly

SAFETY TALK - REPORT IT OR REGRET IT

What's At Stake

Everyone is a safety inspector; it's part of the job to watch out for any hazards.

What's The Danger

An unreported problem today might result in a fatality tomorrow. However, many hazards and injuries go unreported because workers don't know how to report them.

Examples

Incidents

Sometimes you might hesitate to report an incident because it might ruin an accident-free rating, or lose a safety prize for the crew. The costs of not reporting can be very severe.

Close Calls

Again, there is reluctance to report close calls because of embarrassment, or fear of getting into trouble. However, you might save the next person from serious injury or death. In fact, you frequently learn more from close calls than from injury incidents.

Broken, Damaged or Malfunctioning Equipment

You may know that the cord on a tool is damaged, but the next person might not notice it and receive a fatal electric shock. You might know about the crack in that ladder rung, but your unsuspecting coworker may take a bad fall.

Spills

The hazards of spills range from slips and falls to toxic chemical exposure, environmental damage, fires and explosions. Spills of certain materials are a threat to the whole community.

Fire Hazards

Everyone needs to watch out for fire hazards such as accumulations of combustible materials.

Defective Safety Equipment

Defective safety equipment. Damaged personal protective equipment, empty fire extinguishers and smoke detectors that don't work are just a few examples.

Unsafe Conditions

Someone has to speak up about job hazards so that something can be done about them. You have a right and an obligation to report problems such as contact with chemicals, hazardous atmospheres and unsafe equipment.





This includes reporting the unsafe actions of others.

Injuries

You may know that the cord on a tool is damaged, but the next person might not notice it and receive a fatal electric shock. You might know about the crack in that ladder rung, but your unsuspecting coworker may take a bad fall.

How To Protect Yourself

If you are authorized and qualified to do so, fix hazards yourself. Otherwise, report hazards so they can be corrected. Report incidents, injuries or close calls, as well as anything which threatens your safety or that of your co-workers or the public. Be sure to report to the first aid station or medical

personnel for all injuries. Recurring minor injuries may be an indication of a bigger safety problem.

Final Word

Learn the procedures for reporting problems in your workplace. Find out whom you should talk to when you have safety concerns.

Near miss incidents are sources of valuable information for safety coordinators and getting employees to report them are important.

DOWNLOAD INJURY REPORT FORM

READY-TO-USE INJURY REPORT FORM

This form must be completed whenever an employee suffers an injury. Then submitted to the appropriate individuals for review and further implementation.

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8 STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE NEAR MISS MANAGEMENT

What's At Stake

Getting workers to report safety incidents is hard enough; getting them to report near misses can seem impossible. As a result, many near misses go unreported. But near misses are a valuable source of information for safety coordinators as they provide an opportunity for you to identify hazards or weaknesses in your OHS program and make corrections to prevent future incidents. Two papers from researchers at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania provide some insight on how to effectively manage near misses. We'll tell you what these papers have to say and how to apply their findings in your workplace.

Learning From Near Misses

The Wharton School researchers explain that it's long been recognized that by focusing on minor incidents, such as near misses, it's possible to reduce the probability of having major incidents. Think of the well-known safety pyramid. Near misses, which are at the base of the pyramid, occur much more frequently than serious incidents. They're also smaller in scale, often simpler to analyze and easier to resolve. And

usually each major incident can be linked to a number of minor ones that happened earlier. So by addressing the causes of these precursor events effectively, you can avoid more serious—and costly—incidents and/or minimize the damage that they might cause if they occur.

Example: Several rows of

“Near miss incidents are sources of valuable information for safety coordinators and getting employees to report them is important.”

shelving collapse in a storeroom. No one is hurt and only minor property damage is done. However, an investigation into this near miss or minor incident may reveal that the shelves collapsed because they weren't installed properly, were damaged or were overloaded. Once you know what caused this incident, you can take steps to prevent a similar collapse from happening in the future, such as by ensuring that shelving is properly installed, repairing or replacing damaged shelving or setting rules for storing materials on shelves to prevent

overloading.

Components Of Effective Near Miss Management

The Wharton researchers conducted over 100 interviews of employees at all levels of various Fortune 500 companies and concluded that there are eight components of an effective near miss management program:

1. Broad Definition Of Near Miss

The first step is identifying what constitutes a “near miss.” So you need a clear definition of this term. And everyone must be trained on this definition and how it applies in the workplace. The researchers recommend that your definition of “near miss” be broad and cover a wide variety of events, such as:

- Unsafe conditions;
- Unsafe behaviour;
- Minor incidents/injuries that had potential to be more serious;
- Events where injury could have occurred but didn't;
- Events where property damage resulted or could have resulted but didn't;

- Events where a safety barrier was challenged, such as a worker bypassing a machine guard; and
- Events where potential environmental damage could result.

The researchers note that there's merit in distinguishing these categories and addressing them by different means. But because the overriding objective is to improve workplace safety, encompassing these events in one broad definition is also beneficial.

The recommended definition: "A near miss is an opportunity to improve health and safety in a workplace based on a condition or an incident with potential for more serious consequences."

2. Reporting

You can't manage near misses and learn from them unless you know they're occurring. So once a near miss is identified, it should be reported, preferably in writing, by either the person who identified the near miss or by a supervisor to whom a near miss was reported verbally by someone else. The researchers recommend having a clear and simple procedure for reporting near misses to encourage this process and

increase the probability of reporting near misses.

The OHS laws, either directly or implicitly, require workers to report near misses. (The chart below notes the language in each jurisdiction's OHS act that contains or suggests this requirement.) But workers may still be reluctant to report near misses. They may be afraid of being disciplined if the near miss involved a violation of your safety rules or procedures. Or they may not believe management will actually do anything to improve safety if they report a near miss. So they stay quiet about their close calls.

3. Prioritization

Once a near miss is reported, you need to prioritize it. This critical step determines:

- The path to be followed in the subsequent steps;
- The amount of attention that will be given to the incident;
- The depth of analysis that will be performed in finding its causes;
- The amount of resources that will be dedicated to finding and implementing solutions; and
- The extent to which the information about this incident will be disseminated throughout

the company.

Not all near misses are high priority nor are all of them low in priority. But although labelling a large number of near misses as high priority may overburden the management program, having all near misses as low priority items prevents identification of major issues. And if a seemingly simple, low priority near miss happens too often, it should increase in priority. So it's important to monitor the system to ensure that near misses are properly prioritized. Adequate training of those people who'll most likely determine the priority of a near miss when it's reported, such as supervisors or members of the JHSC, can help you achieve this goal.

4. Distribution Of Relevant Information

Information about the incident should be distributed to the people who'll be determining its cause. Who the appropriate people are will depend on the priority and nature of the near miss. So develop distribution procedures for various priority levels. But keep in mind that the goal is for the information to:

- Be transferred quickly;
- Reach all appropriate people; and
- Be presented in a useful

and understandable format.

5. Determination Of Cause

Next, you need to identify both the direct and root causes of the near miss. If the causes aren't readily apparent, you may need to form an investigative team to look into the event. But conducting a root cause analysis of a near miss is no different than doing one for an incident in which a worker was injured or killed.

6. Identification Of Solution

For each identified cause of a near miss you need to identify a solution. In some situations, several causes can be corrected with a single solution. In others, there may not be a feasible, effective solution to eliminate the hazard, so you may need to take a less than ideal corrective action. Generally, for an identified near miss, safety improvements can be ranked from most to least beneficial as follows:

- Elimination of the cause of the hazard;
- Reduction of the potential hazard level or degree of risk of exposure to it;
- Installation of safety devices;
- Installation of warning signs to alert people to

the hazard;

- Implementation of new safe work procedures to account for the hazard; and
- Increased worker awareness of the hazard, such as through safety talks.

7. Implementation Of Solution

Once you identify the necessary solutions, you should implement them and inform anyone affected by the particular near miss, such as workers and supervisors who work with the equipment involved or in that section of the workplace. And if the solution includes new or revised safety procedures, make sure to train all workers who'll have to use these procedures.

8. Monitoring

Implementing the solution to a near miss isn't the end of the process. You should carefully monitor the changes made to ensure that they effectively address the causes of the incident. In addition, remedying one problem can sometimes create other unforeseen hazards, particularly for subtle changes. Thus, managing these changes and ensuring no new hazards

are created is critical to the success of a near miss program. And make sure that the person who reported the near miss is aware of the outcome of this process.

Bottom Line

Near misses are a largely untapped safety improvement resource, say the Wharton researchers. An effective near miss management program can help you tap the potential of this valuable source of safety information and use it to improve your workplace's overall OHS program.

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