

Safety Facts: Incident Investigation*



It is a regulatory requirement for workers to report incidents and close calls to the employer, and it is a regulatory requirement for the employer to investigate them. However, in BC many incidents are not reported or investigated properly as a result incidents and injuries from the same cause are regularly repeated.

Why Is It Important?

When incidents or near misses occur at your workplace it is a result of a portion of the management system designed to keep employees safe at work failing. Incident investigations are generally referred to as a reactive response to improve safety in an organization as someone has to get hurt for something to improve.

Not responding to this knowledge of failure is equivalent to driving your car with the low oil warning light on. You can do it for a while before bad things happen. Dealing with the problem quickly and effectively is always the best solution.

The interesting thing about incident investigation is that it gives company management the key to continuous improvement, solving safety issues in the work process leads to less injuries lower claims costs and more productive work processes.

Key Items to Remember

- In order for an incident investigation program to be effective, it needs to have the goal of reducing injuries at the workplace.

- In order to achieve this goal a program requires a committed management team that is willing to provide the necessary resources to conduct investigations in a timely manner and follow through on the corrective actions.
- It also requires a committed workforce of employees to promptly report injuries, identify and report near misses when they occur and take an active role in the investigation process through the safety committee representation.
- With management and employees working together workplace hazards can be systematically removed or managed to acceptable levels to prevent injuries at the workplace.

Safety System Requirements

- In order for workplace investigations to be effective the people conducting the investigations must be trained in the investigation principle requirements.
- It is a regulatory requirement in BC for a member of the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) to take part in all incident investigations.
- Actions recommended in the incident investigation should be tracked to completion through the JHSC.
- Results of incident investigations should be communicated, to all company employees.
- Incidents should be reviewed on a regular frequency to identify trends in injury type, and location.

Preventative Next Steps

- To move your company to a higher level of safety incident investigations need to be done on near miss events where system failures occurred but no one was injured.
- This is not as easy to accomplish as it sounds. People are afraid of the management response when problems are brought forward that demonstrate a lack of proper tools, equipment, training or supervision.
- In order for this communication to take place all employees need to feel that they will be treated with respect if they bring a near miss forward and will not be punished or ridiculed as a result of the report.
- When a near miss occurs as a result of horseplay or reckless disregard of safety procedures, discipline can result so this must proceed in a transparent manner so that everyone is treated fairly. If the goal of reducing incidents is the only agenda then progress towards zero injuries is possible.



For additional resources visit:

Work Safe BC

Incident Investigation
Toolbox Talk*

Name of Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Safety Specific Training Requirements: Identified Hazards/concerns

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Employee feedback/questions/recommendations

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Workers who attended

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Key Talking Points
