



# MANAGEMENT: ACCIDENT/INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

## INTRODUCTION

Accidents and incidents can happen in any workplace at any time. After an accident or incident occurs, an investigation into the accident or incident should be conducted. An investigation is not conducted to place blame, but rather to find the root causes of the accident or incident and for corrective actions to be created and implemented.

## WHEN SHOULD AN ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT BE INVESTIGATED?

An accident or incident should be investigated when there is a near miss (a case where an injury did not occur, but if something had been different an employee could have been injured) or when there is an injury or illness.

An investigation should start immediately after the accident or incident occurs; however, if it cannot be immediately investigated, the investigation should start no later than 24 hours after the accident or incident.

## WHO IS ON THE INVESTIGATION TEAM?

An investigation team will usually be comprised of:

- Safety officers
- Management
- Supervisors
- Employees
- Outside accident/incident investigation officers

## HOW SHOULD AN INVESTIGATION BE CONDUCTED?

When investigating an accident or incident, employees should do the following steps:

- Arrange for rescue or first aid
- Keep employees calm
- Preserve the scene and evidence of the accident or incident
- Contact your supervisor or manager
- Take notes on the scene of the accident or incident
  - Notes can include sketches, photos, diagrams, etc.
  - Notes should include factors like environment, behavior, and equipment
- Conduct interviews with the victim, eyewitnesses, witnesses, and other employees who are knowledgeable about the area or task
- Look at documentation including maintenance logs, training logs, schedules, safety procedures, etc.
- Analyze the data
- Create and submit a report
  - The report should include recommended corrective actions
- Implement corrective actions
- Follow-up on corrective actions





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## HOW SHOULD EMPLOYEES PRESERVE THE SCENE?

After an accident or incident has occurred, the scene should not be disturbed. To preserve the scene, employees should do the following:

- Tape, isolate, or cone off the area.
- Do NOT touch or remove the evidence at the scene. Unless someone is in immediate danger, items should remain as they are until the investigation team has given the OK for cleanup.
- Take photos or draw sketches of the scene.

## HOW SHOULD INTERVIEWS BE CONDUCTED?

When conducting interviews, employees should do the following:

- Conduct the interview in a private place.
- Inform the employee that they can have an employee representative present if one is available and it is appropriate for the interview.
- Inform the employee that the interview is not to place blame, but to get the facts and find the root cause so that future accidents can be avoided.
- Take notes or use a recorder during the interview. If you use a recording device, remember to get the interviewee's consent before using it.
- Listen and do not interrupt the employee while they explain what they know about the accident or incident. Offer a blank piece of paper or sketch pad to the employee to use as a reference.
- Ask clarifying questions to fill in any missing information.
- Repeat back to the interviewee the factual information and correct any inconsistencies.
- Ask the employee what they think could have prevented the accident or incident.

## LOOKING OVER DOCUMENTATION

Before or after interviews, the investigation team should look at all relevant documents associated with the accident or incident. Such documents include:

- Maintenance logs or records
- Training logs or records
- Schedules
- Safety procedures

## WRITING THE REPORT

When writing the report, employees should use the information gathered to identify all root and secondary causes of the accident or incident to create corrective action recommendations. The corrective actions should be unique to the accident or incident with a reasonable time frame of implementation.

## CONCLUSION

Accident or incidents that occur need to be investigated. Investigations are not to be used to place blame, but rather to find and eliminate the root cause of the accident or incident. These investigations are a team effort and it is a process that should not be rushed.