

A Comprehensive Guide to Investigating and Reporting Workplace Accidents

*Authored by
Albert L. Sica*

A Comprehensive Guide to Investigating and Reporting Workplace Accidents

Accidents that happen in the workplace often result in serious situations. Effectively investigating both accidents and near-misses is crucial to preventing future incidents. A well-structured accident investigation process not only helps you to understand what went wrong, but also to implement corrective actions, leading to overall improved safety.

Below, we have detailed a comprehensive guide on how to report and investigate workplace accidents, from the initial fact-finding process to implementation of corrective measures.

Key Considerations

- **Incident Types:** Categorize each incident as Major, Serious, Minor, or Near Miss based on specific characteristics of the incident in order to tailor the investigation and corrective actions;
- **Basic Questions:** Address facts such as the location of the incident, the sequence of events, the exact cause, and the nature of any injuries at the onset of the investigation;
- **Categorization of Factors:** Consider people, equipment, material, and environmental factors for a thorough understanding of the incident;
- **Focus on Process:** Since most operational failures (~90%) are due to human error, focus on improving processes and systems rather than addressing isolated errors

Fact-Finding Process for Event Reconstruction

Gather Information

This initial step is critical to determining facts and circumstances of the event. All relevant information about the accident or near miss is gathered, this includes collecting evidence from the scene (physical and documentary). Collected evidence can be damaged equipment, hazardous materials, and any records related to the incident.

Conduct Interviews

Within 24 hours of the incident, the supervisor should separately interview at least two employees directly involved, near, or familiar with the processes related to the incident.

Detailed statements from the injured employee and any witnesses need to be obtained as these statements will cover what happened, what caused the incident, and any contributing factors, allowing the reconstruction of the sequence of events leading up to the injury.

Establish Known and Unknown Facts

Build a clear picture of the incident, including verification of details provided in interviews and cross-checked with physical evidence previously collected.



Develop an Event Timeline

A timeline should be created that starts from the occurrence of the incident, working backward by using information collected. Each task, event, and decision made must be included in the timeline to give a true picture of the loss. This should include the documentation of physical and emotional conditions, knowledge, and goals at each stage.

Determine Contributing Factors

Contributing factors that led to the accident should be identified using the event timeline previously created, while taking into consideration all aspects such as equipment condition, environmental factors, and human actions to analyze the data.

Identify Root Causes

Determine the root causes of the incident, focusing on the contributing factors and concentrating on systemic issues rather than individual mistakes.

Implement Corrective Actions

Recommend Specific Solutions

Develop specific, feasible improvements to address root causes. These solutions should follow the hierarchy of hazard control.

Submit for Approval

Submit proposed corrective actions to the appropriate party for approval as they will guide the implementation strategy.

Monitor Changes

Conduct checks for effectiveness once corrective actions have been implemented. This will ensure that actions do not increase risk but rather address the root cause of the incident. Follow-up interviews with employees involved in the incident will assess if additional adjustments are needed.

By following these steps, you can conduct a thorough accident investigation, identify root causes, and implement effective corrective actions. This approach not only helps to resolve current issues, but also strengthens overall workplace safety and reduces the likelihood of future incidents.

If you have any questions on claims or incident response or want to discuss your company's claims process, please contact Maggie Ingels, Senior Consultant, Claims and Risk Services, at 732-395-4262 or mingels@thealsgroup.com.