

Incident Investigations

Although some incidents may occur, even with the most comprehensive safety and health program in place, the same incident need not occur twice. Incidents do not simply happen; they are caused. Usually incidents result from multiple causes which can be determined by effective incident investigation. Incidents are often caused by a combination of unsafe acts and unsafe conditions. If employees report all incidents that result in injury, illness, first aid or near miss, and management investigates and follows up with corrective action, recurrences can be prevented. Incident investigations reflect management's concern and promote a company's safety program.

The investigation needs to focus on fact finding, and not on fixing blame. If care is not taken to ensure this, more harm than good may result. This means that the investigation should be concerned with only the facts, although individuals should still be held accountable for their actions.

WHO SHOULD CONDUCT THE INVESTIGATION?

This should be determined before an incident occurs. It is recommended that the supervisor make an immediate report after completing the initial investigation. This is done because the supervisor will be most familiar with the operation and will most likely be responsible to put into effect and oversee the resulting recommendations.

COMPLETING THE INVESTIGATION:

The investigation should be made as soon after the incident as possible.

This will help ensure the facts gathered are fresh in everyone's mind and before witnesses forget important details. This will also ease other employees' concerns about a recurrence.

Document the investigation.

The use of a form or guide will go a long way to assure that all necessary information is covered.

Interview witnesses individually.

Every employee who was involved in the incident, or witnessed the incident, should be questioned.

If contradictory information is received, supervisors should interview those involved a second time.

Interview the injured worker promptly while the information is clear.

No possible causes for the incident should be eliminated until all the details are gathered.

Conclusions should not be drawn until a thorough investigation is completed and all the underlying causes are uncovered.

Control and preserve the scene.

Since conditions and evidence can change rapidly, it may be useful to photograph or videotape the area and equipment in use at the time of the incident.

Other steps which may assist to preserve evidence are to keep samples of damaged materials and machine items which may have failed, if practical. This could lead to a recovery of claim costs. It may also be necessary to section off the incident scene to ensure the evidence is not altered before the investigation can be completed.

Joint investigations with Zenith or other outside agencies may be needed when causes are hard to identify or isolate.

Compile the information in an organized manner utilizing an incident investigation form.

All possible questions regarding the incident should be answered and the corrective action needed to prevent a recurrence should be described.

Incident Investigation Report

The purpose of this report is to help prevent similar incidents from recurring. Make this report as accurate and thorough as possible. Remember, always follow-up with the appropriate corrective action(s).

Incident: Near Miss Minor Injury Minor Illness Major Injury Major Illness

Incident Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM

Injured Employee: _____

Occupation: _____ Months on this job: _____


Incident Description
Where did the incident occur?

Witness(es)

How did the incident occur? (What was the employee doing when injured?)

Describe the injury(s) or damage

What unsafe act(s) or condition(s) contributed to the incident?


Circle Affected Body Part

Corrective Actions
What do you recommend be done (or have you done) to prevent this type of incident from recurring?

What corrective action(s) has (have) been taken? _____ Date: _____

If you suspect that this claim is fraudulent, call Zenith's Fraud Hotline: 1-866-296-4748

Investigation conducted by: _____ Date: _____

Report reviewed by: _____ Date: _____

Ask open-ended questions.

Look for unsafe acts and conditions by asking Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How? Some basic questions that need to be answered during the investigation are described below.

When did the incident occur?

In addition to the date of the incident, the time of day, shift and day of the week should also be stated.

Also, information as to whether the incident occurred during the beginning, middle or end of the shift may be helpful.

Where did the incident occur?

The actual incident site should be described in detail.

Determine if the persons involved were where they were supposed to be, and whether the equipment was in the proper location.

Who was involved?

Generally, more than the injured person is affected by an incident, and often additional individuals contribute to the incident causes.

How did the incident occur? (What was the employee doing when injured?)

Types of questions to ask include:

- What was the action or procedure being done?
- Was the employee properly trained?
- Was there anything unusual about the procedure or personnel?
- What tools or equipment were involved?

By answering these questions, all the facts of the incident are brought together.

Why did the accident occur?

It is important to determine why the accident occurred in order to identify the corrective actions which should be taken.

Describe the injury (s) or damage

Detail what body part was affected and if a third party or defective product contributed to the incident, save any evidence.

What unsafe act (s) or condition (s) contributed to the incident?

The unsafe acts of persons and the unsafe conditions that cause incidents can be corrected only when they are known specifically. Unsafe Acts are violations of established safety policies/procedures which could result in an incident. Unsafe Conditions are mechanical or physical conditions which if not eliminated, guarded or altered could result in an incident.

What do you recommend be done (or have you done) to prevent this incident from recurring?

This is the single most important question of any incident investigation in order to prevent incidents from recurring.

ONCE THE INCIDENT INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETED:

Completing the report

Remember, its accuracy and timeliness will also be crucial to any possible litigation.

Take or recommend corrective action.

Recommendations should be directed at correcting the root cause of the incident.

Document corrective action

The finding should be reviewed by the Company's Safety Coordinator. In addition, it can be reviewed at a safety meeting.

As with all recommendations, formal follow-up procedures should be established to assure timely implementation and completion of corrective actions.

Report Distribution

The people having the greatest control over the work situation relating to the incident should be the first people to receive the report. These may include the immediate supervisor, department manager, safety director, safety committee and the president.

The person or office responsible for handling personnel matters should also receive a copy immediately in order to help expedite any processing of workers' compensation insurance payments, etc.

Remember, prevention of future incidents is the key and main focus of any investigation. If you have any questions, or need professional assistance with incident investigations, call you Zenith Safety and Health Consultant.