



# Incident Investigation

## Definitions of Basic Terms

**Accident** — An unplanned incident resulting in an event that has caused — or is capable of producing — physical harm and/or property damage

**Near Miss or Near Accident** — An unplanned incident that does not result in injury or property damage; it has the potential to inflict injury or property damage if not corrected — near misses equate to 75% of industrial injuries!

**Hazards** — Any existing or potential condition or procedure which, by itself or through interaction with other variables, may result in death, injury or property damage

**Hazard Recognition** — Establish a program to recognize, evaluate and eliminate unsafe acts and conditions from the work environment

## What Is an Incident Investigation?

An organized and planned collection of the facts — the end goals:

- Determine who, what, where and when of the near miss or accident
- Develop a remedy to correct the unsafe condition, act and work practice
- Never use the investigation to fix blame

## Written Action Plan for an Investigation

Develop, write and practice often the organization's incident investigation plan. An effective plan contains:

- Authority from senior management to conduct the necessary investigations
- Names of the individuals in charge of the investigations
- Means to quickly notify the investigating team
- Instructions on the use of special equipment to be worn or brought to the scene
- Incident investigation procedures

### Want to know more?

As your WorkSafe Consultants, we're committed to providing you unrivaled loss-control services and online safety materials, including:

- Safety-training modules accessible 24/7 for policyholders' employees
- Loss-control booklets and other printed materials available to print and order from our website
- Low-cost safety training videos from our online library

Check them out today at [AccidentFund.com](http://AccidentFund.com).

## Conducting the Investigation

- Isolate the incident investigation area
  - Permit the emergency response personnel (police, firefighters) to perform their duties — as soon as these procedures are completed and the injured are treated, isolate the area
  - Block off the entire area surrounding the scene with barriers or yellow tape
  - Use a systematic approach to the investigation
  - Look for the basic — or root — cause that contributed directly or indirectly to the accident
  - Note any deficiencies in management
- Make a permanent record of the evidence — follow the rule of thumb: *when in doubt, record it!*
  - Written notes/sketches
  - Photography
  - Videotape
  - Dictated observation
  - Diagrams
- Interview witnesses
  - Conduct the interview as soon as possible at the accident site
  - Conduct one-on-one interviews
  - Relax the interviewee, explain the process
  - Ask questions that do not require a yes or no answer; use an open-ended format
  - Be a good listener, take notes and review what you heard

## Reporting Accidents

- Write a comprehensive accident report — include the findings, causes, and recommended corrective actions

## OSHA Recordkeeping Requirements

Injuries/illnesses must be recorded if they result in any of the following:

- Death
- Days away from work
- Restricted work or transfer to another job
- Transfer to another job
- Medical treatment beyond first aid

Remember — the purpose of incident investigation is to record the findings and causes, and to make recommendations to prevent recurrence — not to place blame.