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 an injury or property damage; it has the potential to inflict injury or property damage if not corrected — near misses predict 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

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
Incident Investigation (continued)

Conducting the Investigation (continued)

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
- One or more lost workdays
- Restriction of motion or work
- Loss of consciousness
- 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 find blame!