

Accident Investigation

How to Conduct Accident Investigations

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Background

What is a workplace accident and what do you do when an accident occurs? Employees, supervisors, managers and safety personnel all have an important role to play. Basically, an accident is an unscheduled event that interrupts the smooth flow of profitable production and may or may not result in an injury. Besides injuries, accidents can also result in damaged equipment, loss of product, increased labor costs and an unfavorable public opinion of the company and its employees.

One of the most important steps after an accident occurs is to thoroughly investigate what happened, how it happened and why it happened. This process uncovers information that is helpful in preventing similar accidents from recurring in the future. The value of a properly conducted investigation includes improved methods and procedures, identification of training needs, identification of hazards and reduced costs.

Steps for Investigating Accidents

1. **Seek Medical Attention:** once an accident has occurred, medical attention should be administered to the injured employee. Immediately remove hazards to ensure the safety of coworkers.
2. **Begin the Investigation:** immediately begin the accident investigation, (no later than 24 hours) and should involve supervisors, witnesses and coworkers. Bring the following tools to the investigation:

- + Blank accident report
- + Pen, pencil, clipboard
- + Camera; audio recorder
- + Measuring tape; flashlight
- + Company policies; safety regulations
- + Any special instruments
- + Barricade tape; safety equipment



3. **Document Conditions:** review the workplace physical conditions, people, and documented the information for future use, including the following:

- + Names; date; time; shift
- + Equipment; work area; tools; machinery; chemicals
- + Condition of lighting; floor; temperature; wind
- + Training; task; experience level

4. **Interview Witnesses:** this includes injured employees, coworkers and bystanders. During investigation interviews, remember to...

- + Be at ease; the process is fact finding, not fault finding.
- + If possible, interview the injured employee and witnesses at scene of accident.
- + Ask open ended questions; don't be defensive, aggressive or judgmental.
- + Get the injured employee's and witness's version of the accident separately.
- + Repeat the accident description to the employee and witnesses to ensure its accuracy.
- + Stress that the ultimate purpose of the investigation is to prevent the accident from recurring.



Accident Investigation Quiz

1. An accident is an unscheduled event which disrupts work and may involve an injury:

- True
- False

2. Within what timeframe after an accident occurs should it be investigated? _____ .

3. Areas to review during an accident investigation are:

- Equipment and tools
- Machinery and chemicals
- Condition of lighting, floor, temperature and wind
- All of the above

4. Accident investigation outcomes are to:

- Reduce costs and liability
- Identify hazards
- Improve training
- All of the above

5. Accidents are:

- Preventable
- Inevitable
- Predetermined
- Non-preventable



Answers:

1. True
2. Within 24 hours
3. All of the above
4. All of the above
5. Preventable

