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Accidents Investigations

“WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHY, WHERE, and HOW”

An accident is an unplanned event. It may or may not involve property damage or injuries. Studies show that approximately 85% of accidents are caused by an unsafe act, the other 15% by unsafe conditions.

Accident investigation plays an important role in determining the true cause or causes of an injury, property damage, or a near-miss. Once the cause(s) are identified then we can make changes to procedures and correct hazards to prevent future injuries or property damage of a similar nature.

We conduct accident investigations for near-misses, accidents involving injuries and/or property damage at project sites. Some will be more in-depth than others, depending on the situation.

What we need from you is (1) to report all accident or near-misses immediately and (2) cooperate with investigation. Remember, we are not trying to point fingers to find someone to “blame”, we are trying to assess what happened so we can figure out what to do to prevent it from happening again.

A good accident investigation is aimed at determining the hazards that led to the accident and any other related hazards that could lead to accidents in the future. We ask what happened? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Who was involved? How did it happen? Hopefully, the answers will lead to why it happened and how we can keep it from happening again.

When it comes to correcting the hazards, our best resource is the people who know the job and the equipment best – you.

Basic Rules for Accident Investigation

- The purpose of an investigation is to find the cause of an accident and prevent further occurrences, not fix the blame. An unbiased approach is necessary to obtain objective findings.
- Visit the accident scene as soon possible while the facts are fresh and before witnesses forget important details.
- If possible, interview the injured worker at the scene of the accident and “walk” him/her through a re-enactment.
- All interviews should be conducted as privately as possible. Interview witnesses one at a time. Talk with anyone who has knowledge of the accident, even if they did not witness it.
- Consider taking signed statements in cases where facts are unclear or there is an element of controversy.
- Document details graphically. Use sketches, diagrams and photos as needed, and take measurements when appropriate.
- Focus on hazards and causes. Develop an analysis of what happened and how it could have been prevented. Determine what caused the accident itself, not just the injury.
- Every investigation should include an action plan. How will you prevent such accidents in the future?
- If a third party or defective product contributed to the accident, save any evidence. It could be critical to the recovery of the claim costs.