

SAFETY MEETING TOPIC: Accident Investigation

An accident is any unplanned event that results in personal injury or in property damage. When the personal injury requires little or no treatment, it is minor. If it results in a fatality or in a permanent total, permanent partial, or temporary total (lost-time) disability, it is serious. Similarly, property damage may be minor or serious. It is best practice to investigate all accidents regardless of the extent of injury or damage. The safety committee will be responsible for completing an accident investigation form as soon as possible after the incident. This will be reviewed by upper management to insure comprehensiveness. A follow-up phone call will be conducted by the safety consultant to the injured party.

In conducting the Accident Investigation, the designated Safety Committee members will:

- Interview the injured employee
- Interview witnesses as soon as possible after an accident
- Inspect the accident site before any changes occur
- Take photographs and make sketches of the accident scene if necessary
- Review documents of related operating procedures
- Record pre-accident conditions, the accident sequence, and post-accident conditions
- If necessary, document the location of victims, witnesses, machinery, energy sources, and hazardous materials.
- Complete an accident investigation report and submit it to the VP-Service

In spite of their complexity, most accidents are preventable by eliminating one or more causes. Accident investigations determine not only what happened, but also how and why. The information gained from these investigations can prevent recurrence of similar or perhaps more disastrous accidents. Accident investigators are interested in each event as well as in the sequence of events that led to an accident. The accident type is also important to the investigator. The recurrence of accidents of a particular type or those with common causes shows areas needing special accident prevention emphasis.

All accidents have multiple causes that intersect in time and space. If we can deduce the causes and eliminate anyone of them, we can prevent a repeat of the exact same accident from happening again. Many times eliminating one of the causes also eliminates future accidents that might have occurred with other elements as well. The key is to investigate until the true causes of the accident are discovered.

We are striving for an accident free workplace. An accident is a learning event for our safety program. But the recurrence of the same accident is a failure of the safety program! Intensive accident investigation should prevent any failures.

Provided by: Hellman & Associates, Inc., www.ehscompliance.com, 303-384-9828

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