

Accident Investigation Basics

Accident

- Most would agree an accident is unplanned and unwanted
- Accidents are controllable
- Stops the normal course of events and causes property damage or personal injury, minor or serious, and can result in fatality

Accident

- Not just “one of those things”
 - Most workplace injuries and illnesses are not due to accidents
 - The term accident is defined as an unexpected or unintentional event, or “bad luck”
 - More often than not, workplace injuries and illnesses are a predictable or foreseeable eventuality
- Predictable and preventable events

Accident

- By “accident,” we mean
 - Events where employees are killed, maimed, injured or become ill from exposure to toxic chemicals or microorganisms

Incident

- Wake-up call
 - An incident can be considered a wake-up call
 - Can be thought of as the first in a series of events which could lead to a situation in which harm or damage occurs
 - Should be investigated to determine the root cause and use the information to stop processes and behaviors that could just as easily have resulted in an accident

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The Tip of the Iceberg



- Accidents or injuries are the tip of the iceberg of hazards
- Investigate incidents since they are potential accidents in progress

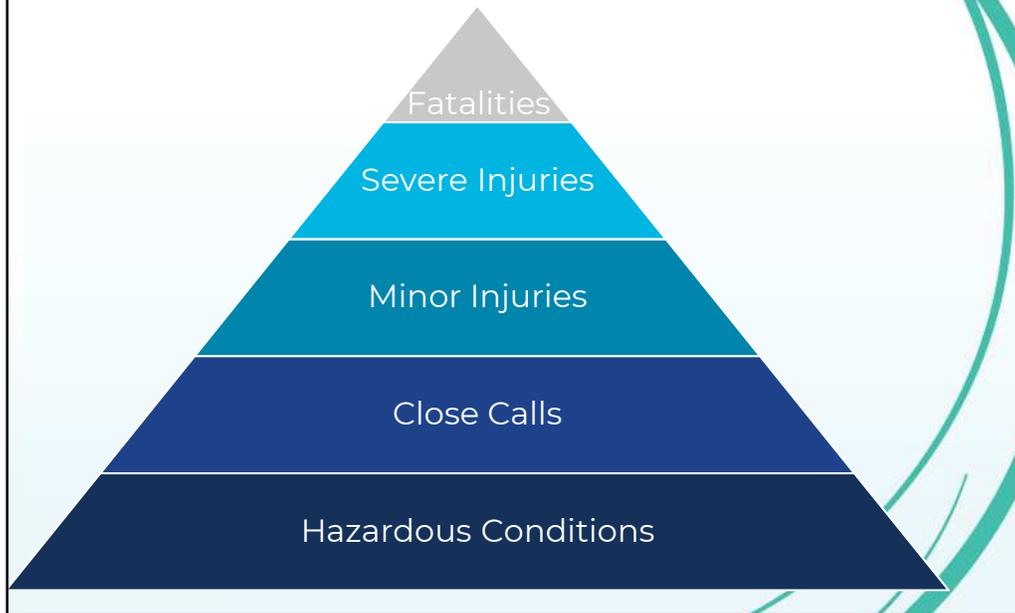
Incident Investigation

- Criteria for investigating an incident:
 - What is reasonably the worst outcome, equipment damage or injury to the worker?
 - What might the severity of the worst outcome have been?
 - If it could have resulted in significant property loss or serious injury, then the incident should be investigated with the same thoroughness as an actual accident investigation

Investigations

- Why investigate?
 - Prevent future incidents (leading to accidents)
 - Identify or eliminate hazards
 - Expose deficiencies in process and/or equipment
 - Money loss with work stoppage
 - Maintain worker morale

Accident Levels



How to Investigate

- Develop a plan
 - Before you have an incident or accident – be prepared
 - Investigation should answer the – who, when, where, what and how
 - One size does NOT fit all – motor vehicle investigation reports differ from warehouse investigations

Developing a Plan of Action

- Develop a plan of action ahead of time
 - Pre-planning helps address situations timely, reduces the chance for evidence getting lost and witnesses forgetting
 - All procedures, forms, notifications, etc. need to be listed out as step-by-step procedures
 - A flow chart may help to quickly show the major components of the program

Developing a Plan of Action

- Plan of action might include:
 - Who to notify in the workplace?
 - How to notify outside agencies?
 - Who conducts internal investigation?
 - What level of training is needed?
 - Who receives report?

Developing a Plan of Action

- Plan of action might include- continued:
 - Who decides what corrections will be taken and when?
 - Who writes report and performs follow up?
 - Written outline with contact numbers
 - Designated spokesperson
 - Designated person in charge of location/jobsite

Reporting Accidents

- Legal requirements
 - OSHA
 - MSHA
 - DOT



Developing a Plan of Action

- Other questions to potentially include:
 - Who will be trained to investigate?
 - Who is responsible for the finished report?
 - What is the time frame?
 - Who receives copies of report?
 - Who determines which recommendations will be implemented?
 - Who is responsible for implementing?
 - Who ensures that fixes are in place and effective?
 - Who will speak to the press?

Public Relations

- Suggestions
 - Remain calm
 - State facts only
 - Refrain from using “no comment”
 - Be prepared
 - Do not speculate
 - Be mindful of image, if on camera
 - Do not wear sunglasses or chew gum

Public Relations

- Know these details:
 - What happened?
 - Why did it happen?
 - How is it being taken care of or fixed?
 - Impact to others?



How to Investigate

- Assemble an investigation kit
- Investigate all incidents and accidents immediately
 - Evidence disappears, gets cleaned up, memory fades
- Collect the facts
 - Be thorough, you may discover other improperly stored items and other near misses

How to Investigate



- Interview witnesses
- Write a report

Investigation Kit



Investigation

- Investigate all incidents and accidents
- Document answers
 - Who was present?
 - What activities were occurring?
 - What happened?
 - Where and what time?
 - Why?

Investigation



- Determine root cause(s)
- Fact finding

Investigation

- Begin investigations timely
 - Crucial to collect evidence and interview witnesses as soon as possible because evidence will disappear and people will forget

Accident Scene



- Actions to take
 - Check for danger
 - Help the injured
 - Secure the scene
 - Identify and separate witnesses
 - Gather the facts
 - Take pictures

Interview Witnesses

- Guidelines
 - Listen
 - Just get facts
 - Talk to witnesses as equals
 - Keep conversations informal
 - Choose a private place to talk
 - Ask open-ended questions
 - Interview promptly after the incident
 - Ask questions in which answers are known

Write the Report



- Factual documentation of the event
- Conclusion

Summary

- Incident vs. Accident
- Benefits of an investigations
- Mechanics of investigating
- Report

Questions?