

# Incident Investigations: Best Practices

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# Agenda

We will discuss:

- Types of incidents
- Why it is important to investigate
- Techniques for a successful investigation

# Types of Incidents

- 1. Injury**—an event that caused injury
- 2. Near miss**—an incident that did not result in an injury, illness or damage but had the potential to
- 3. Property damage**—an event that resulted in damage to company property
- 4. Illness**—an employee becomes ill after being infected with a contagious disease at work

# Why should incidents be investigated?

- Eliminate hazard(s) or potential hazard(s).
- Prevent risk of injury to others.
- Gather specific details about the incident.
- Assist insurance company in determining compensability.
- Help deter fraudulent claims.



# Why it's important to understand direct/indirect costs of incidents...

## Just the Tip of the Iceberg

The real cost of accidents can be measured and controlled.

### Insured Costs

- Medical
- Workers' Compensation

### Uninsured Costs

- Wages not compensated
- Reduced employee morale
- Down time
- Tool & equipment damage
- Cost of hiring and/or training
- Production delays & interruptions
- Clerical time
- Product & material damage
- Legal fees
- Negative public image
- Investigation
- Overtime
- Extra supervisor time

**1:4 Ratio**

An iceberg floating in blue water. The small tip above the water is labeled 'Insured Costs' with a line pointing to it. The much larger submerged part is labeled 'Uninsured Costs' with a line pointing to it. The text '1:4 Ratio' is written in large black font across the submerged part of the iceberg.

**What do you need to  
conduct an effective  
investigation?**

# A Competent Investigator

Listens

Stays Neutral

Acts Objectively

Takes Detailed Notes

Doesn't Jump to Conclusions



The investigator is typically the Safety/Risk Manager and/or Department Supervisor.

# Key Components

- **WHO** was involved?
- **WHAT** was employee doing at the time and prior to the incident?
- **WHEN** did the incident take place?
- **WHERE** did it happen?
- **HOW** did the incident happen?

A thorough investigation will include, but is not limited to, finding out all the above components.

# Employee Report of Incident

- Report should be filled out by the employee in their own words.

Important if/when in legal dispute about mechanism of injury or body parts.

- Report should be completed no matter how minor the incident.
- Track incident reports.



This is one of the most crucial parts of the investigation.

# Investigation “Tool Kit”

- First Aid Kit
- Camera
- Tape Measure
- Gloves
- Flashlight
- Investigation Forms
- Pen
- Clipboard



Keep the kit in a central location for easy access.

# Interviews

- Interviews should be done as soon as possible.
- Focus on fact-finding, not placing blame.
- Discuss what happened leading up to and after the incident.
- Encourage statements to be documented in the employee's own words.
- Most important – LISTEN.

The investigator is typically the Safety/Risk Manager and/or Department Supervisor.



# Investigation “Best Practice”

- Obtain the following:
  - Video/Pictures
  - Incident Statements (not just from witnesses)
  - Job Physical Demands
- Document all versions of the report of incident.
- Write a timeline.

Be careful not to come to a conclusion until after you have gathered all information.

# Determining Root Cause

- ✓ Equipment malfunction
- ✓ Defective tools, equipment
- ✓ Operating without authority
- ✓ Correct equip. not used
- ✓ Job procedure not communicated
- ✓ Inadequate guard/barriers
- ✓ Inadequate training
- ✓ Congested or restricted area
- ✓ Improper placement
- ✓ Mechanical failure
- ✓ Operating without training
- ✓ Not able to perform task
- ✓ Job procedure not understood
- ✓ Procedure not followed
- ✓ Not normal duties performed
- ✓ Horseplay

Use the incident as an opportunity to review safety policies/procedures, PPE use, and find any gaps in your safety training program.



# Corrective Action

- Eliminate the hazard.
- Substitute a less hazardous material.
- Update operating procedure(s).
- Ensure proper use/availability of PPE.
- Re-train/train employees.
- Issue warnings, as applicable.

There may be one solution or multiple actions.



# Final Report

- Once the investigation has concluded, make sure any corrective actions taken are documented.
- Provide copies of information gathered to your insurance carrier, as applicable.
- If the injury is an OSHA Recordable, enter it into your OSHA Log.

If you are questioning compensability, the more details you are able to provide to your insurance carrier, the better.

# What should you provide to your Insurance Carrier?

- All reports completed by employee, witnesses, supervisors, etc...
- Investigation materials.
- Job description and/or job physical demands.
- Final report of investigation.

Maintain good communication with your insurance company throughout the claim.

## Recap

- All incidents should be investigated.
- Take immediate action to correct hazards.
- Investigate to find the facts, not to place blame.
- Be prepared.
- Listen, listen, listen.