

SECTION 8.0 | ACCIDENT/EXPOSURE INVESTIGATION

The supervisor, manager, or other designated individual will investigate all work-related accidents in a timely manner. This includes minor incidents and "near accidents", as well as serious injuries. An accident is defined as any unexpected occurrence that results in injury to personnel, damage to equipment, facilities, or material, or interruption of normal operations.

8.1 | Responsibility for Accident Investigation

Immediately upon being notified of an accident, the supervisor, manager, or other designated individual shall investigate. The purpose of the investigation is to determine the cause of the accident and corrective action to prevent future recurrence; not to fix blame or find fault. An unbiased approach is necessary to obtain objective findings.

8.2 | Purpose of Accident Investigations

- To prevent or decrease the likelihood of similar accidents.
- To identify and correct unsafe work practices and physical hazards. Accidents are often caused by a combination of these two factors.
- To identify training needs. This makes training more effective by focusing on factors that are most likely to cause accidents.

What Types of Incidents Do We Investigate?

- Fatalities
- Serious injuries
- Minor injuries
- Property damage
- Near misses

8.3 | Procedures for Accident Investigations

Immediately upon being notified of an accident the supervisor, manager, or other designated individual will:

1. Visit the accident scene, as soon as possible, while facts and evidence are still fresh and before witnesses forget important details and to make sure hazardous conditions to which other employees or customers could be exposed are corrected or have been removed.
2. Provide for needed first aid or call 911 for the injured employee(s).
3. If possible, interview the injured worker at the scene of the accident and verbally "walk" him or her through a re-enactment. All interviews should be conducted as privately as possible. Interview all witnesses individually and talk with anyone who has knowledge of the accident, even if they did not actually witness it.
4. Report the accident to the main office. Accidents will be reported by the office to the insurance carrier within 24 hours. All serious accidents will be reported to the carrier as soon as possible.
5. Consider taking signed statements in cases where facts are unclear or there is an element of controversy.
6. Thoroughly investigate the accident to identify all accident causes and contributing factors. Document details graphically. Use sketches, diagrams and photos as needed. Take measurements when appropriate.
7. All accidents involving death, disfigurement, amputation, loss of consciousness or hospitalization for more than 24 hours must be reported to Federal or State (if applicable) OSHA immediately.
8. Focus on causes and hazards. Develop an analysis of what happened, how it happened, and how it could have been prevented. Determine what caused the accident itself, not just the injury.
9. Every investigation must also include an action plan. How can such accidents be prevented in the future?
10. In the event a third party or defective product contributed to the accident, save any evidence as it could be critical to the recovery of claim costs.

Accurate & Prompt Investigations

- Ensures information is available.
- Causes can be quickly corrected.
- Helps identify all contributing factors.
- Reflects management concern.
- Reduces chance of recurrence

Investigation Tips

- Avoid placing blame.
- Document with photos and diagrams, if needed.
- Be objective, get the facts.
- Reconstruct the event.
- Use open-ended questions.

Questions to Ask

When investigating accidents, open-ended questions such as who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, and how? will provide more information than closed-ended questions such as "Were you wearing gloves?" Some examples include;

1. How did it happen?
2. Why did it happen?
3. How could it have been prevented?
4. Who was involved?
5. Who witnessed the incident?
6. Where were the witnesses at the time of the incident?
7. What was the injured worker doing?
8. What was the employee working on?
9. When did it happen?
10. When was the accident reported?
11. Where did it happen?
12. Why was the employee assigned to do the job?

The single, most important question that must be answered as the result of any investigation is "What do you recommend be done (or have you done) to prevent this type of incident from recurring?"

Once the Accident Investigation is Completed

- Take or recommend corrective action.
- Document corrective action.
- Management and the Safety Program Administrator will review the results of all investigations.
- Consider safety program modifications.

Information obtained through accident investigations can be used to update and improve our current program.