

Incident Investigation

When to Conduct the Investigation

A supervisor conducts incident investigations with the primary focus to understand why the incident occurred and provide corrective actions. If possible, the investigation should occur when the facts are fresh in the memories of witnesses and employees involved in the incident. This should occur within 24 hours after the incident. If the employee is hurt or distressed about the event, the employee interview should be conducted when the employee is calm or medically fit. The investigation should describe the events that created the incident.

How to Conduct the Investigation

- Secure and document the scene.
 - Remove employees who might still be at risk for a similar incident.
 - Secure the scene with cones or a barricade.
 - Document the site by writing down observed conditions.
 - Photograph the site if needed for the investigation.
 - Document the names of witnesses to the incident for interview.
 - Identify the facts. Don't assume anything, opionate or blame anyone.
- Use the four P's to investigate and document:
 - People—the eyewitness or the ear (hearing) witness
 - Parts—use words such as debris, guards and equipment
 - Position—exact location of the people and parts, providing measurements
 - Paper—records, codes, standards and blueprints provide strong, concrete data

Investigation Interview Steps

- Eliminate distractions and allow the proper timeframe for the interview.
- Conduct the interview at the incident site.
- Interview witnesses separately to get a full detail of their recollection of events without the influence from other witnesses.
- Listen. During a typical interview the interviewer should be talking 25 percent of the time, and the interviewee should be speaking 75 percent.
- Ask open-ended questions. Show the importance of the employee and investigation. Ask for suggestions to solve the problem.

Complete the Incident Investigation Forms

The Incident Investigation Report should be provided with as much detail as possible. All events leading up to the incident are important in determining the main cause of the incident. Environment, behavior and procedures might also contribute to the incident and should be reviewed.

Answer the following:

- What machinery, equipment or conditions existed at the time of the incident?
- Who was present?
- What were the actions that led to the incident?
- What did the employee and witness statements reveal about conditions or events?
- What was the critical incident-producing event?

Corrective Action

Providing corrective action is critical to any incident investigation and will help prevent future incidents. The first method is to eliminate or change the condition or operation that lead to the incident event. If there is a safer method of performing the operation, it should be implemented. The second corrective action is to guard the employee from having contact with the operation. Devices preventing physical contact with the human body represent the majority of machine guards. Use of personal protective equipment should be the last resort when the hazard can't be controlled by engineering or mechanical means. Personal protective equipment (PPE) effectiveness is not consistent unless the supervisor strictly enforces the use and training. The supervisor must instruct the employee in the use of the PPE required for that job. Warning the employee to "be careful" is not a corrective action and cannot be called training and education. Whatever corrective action taken, it should be documented on the Corrective Action Form.