By the Numbers: Incident Investigation



DID YOU KNOW?

The following are facts that should be enough to make very employer stop and consider their environments and workplace incident investigations techniques:

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics multiple workers die every day in American workplaces.
- 4 million serious injuries occur annually, not to mention all the sickness and disease cases resulting from stress and toxins.

Is there a difference between the term “accident” and “incident” in the context of the workplace? The term “accident” has been used often in the past referring to an unplanned, unwanted event. Some people suggest that “accident” was a random event that could not have been prevented!!! OSHA suggest that nearly all worksite fatalities, injuries, illness are preventable.

The term “incident” is the appropriate term when referring to these events.

Incident reporting of all injuries including close calls is critical to the integrity of the workplace.

- It is impossible to create improved processes that protect workers if management is not aware of what kinds of problems are occurring in the workplace that may cause injury or property damage.
- The workplace is even at greater risk for a more serious incident to occur in the future if a minor incident or near miss is ignored or not reported.
- Failure for incident reporting will negate a process in which situations can be corrected to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.
- Employee participation in workplace safety improvement strategies will not be encouraged if incidents are not reported.

KEEP IN MIND

Once the incident has happened the investigation must commerce immediately.

Firstly, follow a written plan.

Secondly, establish the investigative team.

Thirdly, investigative procedure must be implemented.

- **Preserve and Document the Scene**
- **Collect information**
  Collect information leading up to the incident, the incident itself, and other important information is necessary to establish a timeline, identify victims and witnesses, and begin to uncover the initial and root causes of the incident.

- **Interview process**
  - witnesses and victims.
  - Review all Company Manuals, policies and records touching the issues in question

- **Determine the Root Cause**
  The root causes are the underlying reasons why the incident occurred. Root causes generally reflect management, design, planning, organizational and/or operational failings (e.g., employees were not trained adequately; a damaged guard had not been repaired.
  If you truly want to prevent a repeat of an accident, you must go beyond the easy surface causes – "worker was careless" or "employee didn't follow SOP."

- **Implement Corrective Actions**
  The investigation isn't done until all the underlying causes of the incident have been identified and corrective actions are in place.

According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics from harassment, data breaches, healthy and safety issues, near misses, employers reported 2.8 million non-fatal workplace incidents in 2017.

