# Finding the Real Cause of Injuries




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## WHAT’S AT STAKE?

Injuries of employees cause economic-down time, replacement costs and generally lower productivity. It also impacts the life of the injured employee as he or she cannot enjoy the fruits of life like recreation or sport time with their friends or family.

## WHAT’S THE DANGER?

What are the dangerous conditions under which employees find themselves? There are
many but here are a few examples.

- Stacking meat crates and one of them fell, striking a man in the face.
- Man was using piece of wood to follow up work on a joiner. This piece was too small and was grabbed by the joiner blades, causing part of his right middle finger to be amputated, and wounds to other fingers.
- Injured was painting the ceiling and the ladder fell with injured on it.
- Man was assisting a crane lifting pallets. While helping to free the pallet from under a pipe, it swung free and pinned the man against another stationary pallet.
- Woman was holding a locker next to the wall so it could be bolted in place. A man setting a second locker down next to the first. The second locker slipped and fell on the woman’s left foot.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

There are three areas to delve into the examination of injury reports due to accidents.

1. Patterns
2. Attitudes
3. personal responsibility

**Safety specialists look for patterns** they might see a certain type of equipment is involved in a number of injuries, such as impact tools, electrical power tools of metal working machines. They might see patterns involving chemical exposures or slippery decks They might even see attitudes expressed in the injury reports. Sometimes the reports reflect:

- Apathy toward safety
- Resentment at being told how to do a task
- Risk-taking
- Impatience

Look at the explanations of injuries at the beginning of this safety talk. What pattern do you see? They all seem to ascribe some sort of life to inanimate objects.

In each case, the injured person seems to be an innocent victim of an object just waiting for an opportunity to hurt someone. Sounds silly, doesn’t it?

Of course, we know better. Or do we? Looking at them again, we are sure the crate didn’t fall of its own accord, the jointer blades didn’t deliberately grab the piece of wood and chop the man’s finger off, and the ladder didn’t maliciously slide out and carry the man with it. No, in every case somebody did something wrong and the objects either followed the natural laws of motion or the unintentional directions of the worker. We have to ask ourselves why the object behaved as it did, and in each case we will discover a human-made cause.

Let’s take a realistic look at injury incidents. Most of them are the result of things people
did wrong, or the omission of things they should have done. Some are caused by unsafe conditions or environment, but in most of these cases, the situation came about
the result of unsafe personal actions or omissions.

## FINAL WORD

Instead of blaming injuries on conditions or things, let’s look at what people did to cause them. When we are **personally responsible**, we can determine what to do to prevent injuries. Get the real facts on the underlying causes into the injury reports, and the right answers can be found. And, perhaps most important of all, take a look at attitudes. They make the difference between injuries and safety.