Near Miss Booklets



WHAT’S AT STAKE?

A near-miss is defined by OSHA as an unplanned event that does not result in injury, illness, or damage – but had the potential to do so.

Near miss reporting is a safe work procedure that aims to eliminate potential incidents by ensuring that close-calls or near accidents are proactively reported to facilitate swift actions that prevent its reoccurrence. Near miss reporting systems reinforces an organization’s safety culture – promoting active participation in reporting close-calls, enables early interventions and provides leading indicators to reduce workplace fatalities.

WHAT’S THE DANGER?

IMPORTANCE OF NEAR MISS REPORTING

Without a near miss reporting system, the learning begins only when an accident occurs and there is severe loss or injury to human life and property. The notion of reporting close-calls when there’s no damage done seems a futile effort, especially if the odds keep falling in our favor and there are no legal obligations to do so. Writing off a near miss as “no harm no foul” can prove detrimental in the long run. At some point the chain breaks and the luck finally run out, leading to a catastrophic event that gets everyone’s undivided attention to a prevailing hazard. Near miss reporting is the only recognized incident management structure that accurately identifies and reports near misses, effectively communicates risk tolerance measures to employees, eradicates the root cause of the hazard and prevents future accidents or injuries from taking place.

Common Causes of Near Misses

- Unsafe conditions
- Unsafe work practices
- Unsafe procedures
- Human error
- Lack of training
- Lack of safety awareness

- Employees that cut corners
- Lack of communication
- Unsafe tools
- No standardized procedure to report near misses

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

REPORTING NEAR MISSES

- Establish a policy and set of procedures that are clearly presented to and understood by all employees. This policy and procedure should be backed by your senior management.
- Uphold and celebrate a culture of near miss reporting. Support your employees, managers, and supervisors.
- Continually educate your employees about near miss reporting and why it is key. Let them know that they are an important part of making workplaces everywhere much safer.
- Be sure that your policy and procedures are easy to comprehend and employ regularly.
- Don’t let the message die. Keep preaching the importance of this type of reporting. Encourage this type of participation.
- Let the near miss reports lead you to a safer work environment. Act and always seek to improve.
- You should let your workers know that near miss reporting is non-punitive. Many of them may hold back for that very reason.
- Think about what incentives might get your employees on board. Your mission is to celebrate the fact that you’re growing safer in your company every day.
- Consider incentives that acknowledge the participation of your employees – the recognition and reporting of near misses and potential hazards they notice. Reporting will become second nature if you do it the right way. It’s all about safety in performance as well as risk reduction.
- Avoid incentives that recognize supervisors and management, solely based on their performance and outcome of OSHA recordable rates. You don’t want the plan to backfire and suppress reporting and hinder your safety efforts.
- Include this near miss training for all new employees as a part of their orientation.
- Find a way to celebrate the successes of the near miss reporting. Take the time to notice the value and praise your employees for their efforts.

How to improve near miss reporting?

Ease the reporting culture:

Provide employees with a system that is easy to use, understand and communicate reports instantly to concerned personnel.

Fill reports effortlessly:

Empower employees to fill incident details in reports accurately without generating additional work.

Anonymous reporting:

Report at-risk behavior of close aides without disclosing your identity to avoid the fear of being blamed.

Generate curiosity:

To encourage proactive participation, employees need to know all the specifics of the importance of near miss reporting systems and how to use it.

Holistic Participation:

Active engagement from the managerial team can have a ripple effect to encourage employees to prioritize reporting incidents.

Swift hazard resolutions:

Set rapid action teams to investigate and resolve incidents with minimal loss to work-time.

Learn from data:

Analyze trends and record new findings to integrate into other safety systems like behavior-based system (BBS) to check incident prone tendencies.

Encourage open communication:

Highlight recorded hazards and lessons learnt during toolbox talks, bulletin boards, employee orientation programs, etc – creating awareness across your enterprise.

Avoid the Blame Game

A very important part of the near-miss system is learning how to encourage employees to report a near miss without feeling that they will get into trouble.

The key is not to look at it as, ‘Who is to blame?’ Ask what system flaws exists. You have to have a blame-free environment. Very few people are going to report a near miss if there is going to be a negative consequence to them.

People should not be punished for reporting near-miss incidents; instead, supervisors need to encourage their employees to feel comfortable coming forward to achieve a workforce that anticipates and identifies hazards before anyone gets hurt.

FINAL WORD

Near misses and resulting inspections may help prevent an injury or even a fatality, but an investigation cannot take place if the near miss is not reported accurately. Therefore, setting up a successful safety management program to ensure near misses are reported and investigated is an important step in reducing occurrences of serious incidents.