



## WORKPLACE SAFETY PROGRAM ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

The purpose of an accident investigation should be two fold.

- One the process must be fact finding not fault finding.
- Two the factual information gathered must lead to corrective actions. If no action is taken to change the circumstances which allowed the event to take place the entire process is of no value.

The investigation **MUST** be done immediately. The longer the time span between the event and the investigation the less likely the data will be of value.

A written plan outlining the outcomes and procedures should be done prior to the investigation. Outcomes should include;

- Identifying root causes to accidents.
- Exposing errors in processes.
- Identifying and eliminating hazards.
- Correcting unsafe acts and unsafe conditions.
- Making recommendations for preventing future accidents.
- Helping employees be accountable for the action they take.
- Helping supervisors understand their role in each accident.
- Decreasing workers compensation cost.

Procedures should include;

- Understanding why accidents are investigated.
- Pre-planning the investigation.
- Responding to the accident scene.
- Controlling the accident scene.
- Investigating the accident.
- Determine the root cause.
- Developing corrective actions.
- Communicate the results of the investigation.

Each investigation should be made as soon after the accident as possible. A delay of only hours may allow important evidence to be destroyed or removed, intentionally or unintentionally. Memories fade or become confused. The results of the inquiry should be made known quickly. Promptness greatly increases the publicity value in the safety education of employees and supervisors.

Conducting interviews and gathering the factual data can be very difficult when first beginning. The basic steps of questioning should include **who, what, when, where, how, and why.**

**WHO** To learn about the persons involved, ask these questions:

- Name of person, age and gender.
- Address both home and work location.
- Department.
- Job title.
- Length of employment.
- Length of service on present job.
- Immediate supervisor.

**WHAT** Ask about what occurred?

- What happened? Take statements from witnesses to the accident.
- What was the injured person doing just before the event?
- What were others present doing?
- Where was the supervisor?
- Was the injured person doing their regular job?
- How often is that specific task done?
- What tools or equipment was involved?
- Is the person familiar with this task?
- Were safety rules violated?
- Was employee aware of the safety rules?
- Had they been trained in proper safety procedures?
- If equipment was involved, what was the condition at the time of the accident? When was the last time it had been serviced or inspected?
- Was safety equipment required for the job? Was the equipment being used and used properly?
- Did environmental conditions such as weather or noise contribute to the accident?

**WHEN** Be specific about time of day etc.

- Date: month day and year.
- Time: hour am. or pm.
- Environmental conditions: weather, ventilation, noise or odors.

**WHERE** Establish the exact location and conditions present.

- Physical location of the accident.
- Physical layout at the time of the accident.
- Supply photos if possible.

**HOW** Ask very specific questions.

- What was the cause of the accident
- What may have contributed to the causes?
- Are there any underlying causes.
- Were the causes identified direct causes or proximate causes.

**WHY** Try questions like these.

- Were the conditions unsafe?
- How long did conditions exist?
- Did you report these conditions?
- Why or why not?
- Were improper work procedures being used?
- How long has that procedure been used.
- Did you receive training on the procedures?
- When was initial training given ? Refresher training?
- Have all details of the accident been disclosed?
- In your opinion what would have prevented this from occurring?

#### Corrective Action

The purpose of the investigation is to get to the root cause and make changes to prevent a reoccurrence. If accidents are investigated and employees see that nothing changes in either procedures or training, safety rules or enforcement of the existing rules, your efforts are likely to be in vain.