

OHS Program:

8. What is an incident investigation?

Workplace incident is an event that could or does result in unintended harm or damage. Incidents are usually divided into two categories. Those that could have caused harm or damage but did not are referred to as no-loss or near-miss incidents. Those that do cause harm or damage are often called loss-type incidents.

Requirements

The purpose of an incident investigation is to gather all relevant evidence, find the root cause to prevent it from happening again. When writing incident investigation procedures, make sure to:

- Establish the roles, responsibilities and timing for investigating, reporting and minimizing the consequences of incidents
- Select a method to identify the root cause of incidents and put controls in place to prevent it from happening again
- Develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of controls
- Identify the education and training a person needs to be competent in doing an investigation
- include employer and worker representatives who have responsibilities under the OHS program
- Document any failures in the OHS management system identified during an investigation
- Include how results of the incident and controls that are put in place are communicated to workers

Tips for effective management:

Effective OHS programs have procedures for reporting and investigating incidents. By implementing processes to manage incident investigations employers can provide healthy and safe workplace for their employees. Effective incident investigations processes should consider:



- Senior management to promote the investigation of all incidents
- Roles and responsibilities of those involved in an investigation
- Reporting of all incidents to the employer
- Requirements of OHS legislation for documentation
- Education and training for workers and those who conduct investigations
- Giving the individual(s) who conduct investigations an investigation kit
- Making high-potential or high severity incidents priority
- Investigating no-loss incidents and loss type incidents with the same thoroughness
- Worker representatives and affected persons in the investigation process
- Responsible persons to put controls in place and follow up to make sure they are working and no new hazards are created
- Practices to communicate the findings and what has been done to correct the situation
- Findings from investigations to make continual improvement to the OHS program
- Use the results of inspections when establishing, implementing and maintaining the OHS program

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