Incident Reporting



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

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!!! But OSHA suggest that nearly all worksite fatalities, injuries, illness are preventable.

Therefore, the term "incident" is the appropriate term when referring to these events.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Incident reporting of all injuries including close calls is critical to the integrity of the workplace. The following points hi – lite inherent dangers for failure to report.

- 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.
- Without completed incident reports, companies cannot protect themselves from lawsuits.
- Employee participation in workplace safety improvement strategies will not be encouraged if incidents are not reported.
- A strong safety culture will not be fostered if incident reporting is relegated to the trash bin.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

It is clear that incident reporting is critical to a successful workplace safety and health program.

INCIDENT REPORTING

- All incidents, near-misses and injuries should be reported immediately. The employee should not have to make a guess as to whether "their issue or incident"

is worthy of an incident report. When in doubt, file an incident report.

INCIDENT REPORTING TRAINING

- All employees should be trained on the incident reporting process for their company. Ideally, this training is included as part of the on-boarding process for every employee. Another approach is to have the safety manual, with incident reporting included, be required reading for all employees the first week on the job. Throughout the year, holding periodic safety meetings on the hazard, near-miss, and incident reporting processes is essential.

INCIDENT REPORTING PROCESS

- Every company’s incident reporting process is different. Some companies may require employees to report directly to HR or their immediate supervisor to file a report. Others may have a very convenient online reporting system that employees can access through their company’s internet. Typically, and at minimum, a company should provide a standard incident report form that every employee knows how to locate and any employee can complete and submit.

PAST INCIDENT REPORTING

- There should never be any punitive damages associated with any employee filing an incident report. Following the company’s incident reporting process, there should be an interview with the employee to ensure all the facts have been collected, the form is complete, and the nature of the incident is fully understood. The incident reporting follow-up process should include an investigation into the incident, medical care provided to the employee (if needed), corrective actions implemented immediately and preventive actions implemented as deemed necessary to prevent future incidents of the same nature. Only then should the incident report be closed and filed. All incident reports should be saved in a secure location.

FINAL WORD

Incident reporting is critical to a successful workplace safety and health program. Do your employees know how and when to submit an incident report?