



Near Miss Reporting

Near misses happen every day in the workplace. Regardless of their potential for personal injury and property damage, all near misses should be taken seriously and consistently reported.

There are many terms which essentially mean the same thing – accident avoidance, close call, mishap or even narrow escape. It doesn't matter exactly what terminology is used when referring to a near miss. To find out what really matters we only need to look at the answers to these questions:

A. What Exactly Is a Near Miss?

The National Safety Council offers the following definitions, which are recognized by OSHA:

- Accident – An accident is an undesired event that results in personal injury or property damage.
- Incident - An incident is an unplanned, undesired event that adversely affects completion of a task.
- Near Miss - Near misses describe incidents where no property was damaged and no personal injury sustained, but where, given a slight shift in time or position, damage and/or injury easily could have occurred.

B. Why Is It So Important For Near Misses To Be Reported?

We must find ways to hear and learn from our near misses so that the subsequent investigation of can reveal acts, conditions, etc. that will need to be corrected. For example:

- Existing Conditions – Do not be surprised when investigating Near Misses – to find Unsafe Conditions that have been present for some time.
- No Standard Work Practice – Near Miss Incidents are often caused by having no such standard practice or procedure in place which results in having various and most likely unsafe ways to accomplish a task or responsibility.
- Lack Of Training – Another condition that leads to Safety Incidents – is the lack of Training of the Workers involved – i.e., How to safely use a Come-Along.
- Using Improper Or Unsafe Tools – Can a Near Miss Incident ever be caused by management? How about when a tool is given to an employee that is either improper or unsafe to use for the job that that they are asked to perform?
- Cutting Corners – Common in the Work Place will be Employees that “Cut Corners” – i.e., not following the steps that need to be performed in order. Such may be due to Complacency and the belief that they will not get hurt – or it may include simply trying to speed up their work process.
- Lack Of Safety Awareness – The lack of Safety Awareness by people involved in Near Misses and Accidents include not seeing Co-Workers in their immediate Work Area to



placing their Body Parts between Pinch Points to not Checking their work area prior to setting up or beginning their work.

- Outdated Procedures – Organizations must ensure that when their Processes change that they update their Procedures to reflect such changes.

C. How Do Accidents And Near Misses Happen?

Human error is the most common cause of accidents and near misses. Most human errors arise from weaknesses in the system; they must be managed through process, system, or environmental changes. Most people never intend to get injured or hurt others so behavior is categorized into two areas:

- At Risk Behavior – Where we sometimes drift into unsafe habits and lose perception of the risk attached to certain activities. This sometimes happens when we perceive pressure to complete a task in a certain amount of time, so we take shortcuts to accomplish the task more quickly. Over time the rewards of at-risk behaviors become so common that perception of their risk fades or are believed to be justified.
- Reckless Behavior – Has the following characteristics:
 - Always perceive the risk he or she is taking.
 - Understand that the risk is substantial.
 - Behave intentionally, but are unable to justify the risk (i.e., do not mistakenly believe the risk is justified).
 - Know that others are not engaging in the same behavior (i.e., it is not the norm).
 - Make a conscious choice to disregard risk.

D. Why Don't Employees Want To Report Near Misses?

- Employee doesn't recognize the event (incident) as a near miss that needs to be reported. "I didn't get hurt – so nothing actually happened."
- There is No System for Near Miss Reporting.
- Generates Additional Work – i.e., paperwork, subsequent investigation, etc.
- Supervisors and/or Workers have Not Been Instructed How to Report Near Misses.
- Form(s) Used may be too complicated for Near Miss Reporting.
- There is No One Assigned to handle / direct the actions needed to correct what caused the Near Miss.
- Workers have the Mindset that being Safe in the Workplace also includes Being Lucky.

E. The Number One Reason Employees Will Not Report Near Misses:

- Fear Of Blame – Many employees are afraid to report near misses because either they don't want to admit that they didn't follow safety procedures or they will be mistakenly accused of doing something wrong. The goal should be as easy as reporting a garbage can is full or a light bulb is burned out. Blame can and never should be part of the equation – period.