

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Safety Talk - Injury / Incident Investigation

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

When an injury or a "near miss" occurs on the job, it is very important to determine exactly what happened and why. "Near misses" are those incidents that could have resulted in injury or property damage, even though they did not. A successful investigation can reveal an incident's true cause, which can be used to develop safer ways of performing the task, and prevent a similar incident from occurring. It is important that everyone keeps an open mind and remains objective to support and effective investigation that discovers the incident's true cause(s). Remaining objective is a skill that should be reinforced to every level within the organization. Focusing on finding fault instead of facts can hinder discovery of the true root cause, which may be more complex than suspected. Employees may break rules directly resulting in an injury, but the cause is more likely to be a combination of employee, management, equipment, and environmental factors.

Supervisors play a key role in injury investigations; they need to be familiar with investigation procedures, and the people and equipment involved. Everyone must work together to successfully investigate an incident. Supervisors can support a successful investigation by following written procedures, training employees to answer questions truthfully and completely, and not jumping to conclusions. It is important to have a strict no-fault policy so employees feel comfortable reporting injury information instead of fearing the consequences of telling the truth.

When responding to an emergency, safely assist injured person(s) needing medical attention, stabilize the scene (make sure the hazards are controlled), and secure the area to keep non-essential from entering or disturbing the scene. Turn off involved equipment. Identify potential witnesses who saw, heard, or smelled anything that may help explain the incident. Obtain photos or video of the scene; do not disturb the scene until sufficient evidence is gathered to determine the root cause(s) of the incident. If an injury requiring more than minor first aid occurs, contact OEH&S for injury investigation assistance. All injuries are subject to WSU Injury Policy and Procedures, found at www.risk.wayne.edu. If you witnessed the incident, try to remember as many details as possible, and write notes while the incident is still fresh in your mind.

Interview each employee separately, focusing on the "who what when where why and how" of the incident. Ask open ended questions and write down each response. Have the employee read the investigator's notes before leaving.

A report should address the following "4 Cs". Remember to only record facts, not opinions.

- Condition: Provide a detailed description of the recent incident (who, what, when, and where).
- Cause: Verify the analysis process ("5-whys" analysis or other) used to determine the root cause of the incident.
- Corrective Action: Describe short-term and long-term actions taken to correct the hazard that caused the incident. Implement actions that will prevent future occurrences. Use photographs if helpful.
- Containment: Communicate the investigation findings to others on campus responsible for areas with similar hazards (directly, via department, or via OEH&S, as appropriate).

Be prepared that you might not like the investigation's outcome. Injury prevention is the goal. You may need to make changes. Never ignore investigation findings.

