



## **MONTHLY SAFETY BRIEF: INCIDENT INVESTIGATION**

Hygieneering employees may find themselves in a situation with a client or on a job where an incident investigation may need to be completed. Incident investigations are commonly done in situations where an employee was either hurt or there was a “close call” with an employee. A close call is where an employee may have been hurt or injured if the situation had slightly different circumstances.

When discussing an incident, it is important to use the correct terminology for the situation. An incident is when something happens such as an injury, illness or close call that could have been prevented with the correct precautions. The term accident refers to an unplanned, unwanted event that could not have been predicted or prevented.

### **Why We Complete Incident Investigations**

The purpose of completing an incident investigation in the workplace is not to figure out who to blame for the incident. The goal is for the employer to use the information to work on their safety and health program to make it better. Using the information from the incident investigation, it is possible to ensure the safety of employees by taking actions to prevent incidents like the one being investigated from happening in the future to another employee.

When completing an incident investigation, it is important to include the employees in the process. Using only management leaves out the potential for employees working in the field every day to give information on what works to prevent hazards and what doesn't. Having many different perspectives makes the process of identifying the problem more efficient and effective.

The process of investigating an incident works to identify the root cause(s). It is common for investigations to end after a contributing factor has been identified without finding the root cause. For example, if an employee had a box fall on him due to employee hitting the shelf with a forklift and you say the cause was that the employee driving the forklift hit the shelf....that is being very vague. When you settle with a simple cause like this it leaves many questions open and unanswered, such as:

- Was the worker trained? If not, why not?
- Was the worker distracted? If yes, why was the worker distracted?
- Were safe work practices being followed? If not, Why not?

Looking for root cause(s) reveals more conditions that are more easily corrected.

Thorough investigation of all incidents/accidents will lead to identification of accident causes and help:

- Implement corrective actions
- Determine why accidents occur, where they happen, and any trends that might be developing;
- Employees develop an awareness of workplace problems and hazards;
- Identify areas for process improvement to increase safety and productivity; and
- Note areas where training information or methods need to be improved;

### **Steps for Completing an Incident Investigation**

Hygieneering has an Incident/Accident Investigation Form (Occupational Injury/Illness Investigation) and is part of our Safety and Health Program (Section 5). This form should be completed by the injured employee's project manager, the injured employee, and any witnesses within 24 hours of the incident/accident. The investigation form must be kept in the accident recordkeeping file.



For all accident investigations, the Project Manager will perform the following duties:

- Conduct the accident investigation at the scene of the injury as soon after the injury as safely possible.
- Ask the employee involved in the accident and any witnesses, in separate interviews, to tell in their own words exactly what happened.
- Repeat the employee's version of the event back to him/her and allow the employee to make any corrections or additions.
- After the employee has given his/her description of the event, ask appropriate questions that focus on causes.
- Include the following in the initial identification of evidence immediately following the incident: (listing of people, equipment, and materials involved and a recording of environmental factors such as weather, illumination, temperature, noise, ventilation, and physical factors such as fatigue, age, and medical conditions).
- When finished, remind the employee the investigation was to determine the cause and possible corrective action that can eliminate the cause(s) of the accident.
- Complete an accident investigation report with the employee and review data with employee for accuracy.
- Deliver and report to the Director meeting safety committee the results of the investigation.

For additional information and details, please refer to the Hygieneering Safety and Health Manual.



## INCIDENT INVESTIGATION QUIZ

1. Which of the following would not be considered an incident?
  - a. Employee is struck by a lift truck
  - b. Employee slips on a slick floor
  - c. Employee is struck by lightning while working in a thunderstorm
  - d. All of the above would be considered incidents and preventable
  
2. Which of the following is not a reason incident investigations are completed?
  - a. To find the root cause of the incident
  - b. To prevent future incidents
  - c. To find who is at fault
  - d. To improve the safety and health program
  
3. Why is it important to manage the witnesses?
  - a. To provide them with support
  - b. To prevent them from speaking to other witnesses
  - c. To interview them in a timely manner
  - d. All of the above
  
4. An employee being tired can be considered a root cause for an incident.  
 True  
 False

**Instructor(s) – John Feller, CIH, CSP**

**SCORE: PASS / FAIL**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date