

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Accident Investigations for Supervisors

Regardless of the assessments, training, and preventative measures taken to avoid accidents, they will occur. In 2021 there were over 2.6 million injury and illness cases and 5,190 fatal injuries in the United States. While the circumstances are different in each event, the process of investigating and correcting the root causes has remained constant.

What often ensues after an incident is a report that concludes “the employee was careless and failed to follow procedures”. It may be fact that the employee was careless and took a shortcut. What’s important to ask is WHY it existed and WHY it wasn’t previously addressed.

Follow the Facts

Establishing an accident investigation procedure policy that outlines four key areas is the first step to ensuring your supervisors are all following the same guidelines.



Gathering Information

Don’t delay. Conduct the investigation immediately and identify witnesses. Focus on answers to the What, When, Why, and How without allowing your bias to interfere and making premature conclusions.

Aside from who was involved in the accident, consider the following questions:

WHAT	What equipment/machinery was involved?
	What was the person doing prior to the incident?
	What training was provided to the employee(s)?
	What safety precautions are in place to prevent this type of accident?
	What safety rules were/were not being followed?
	What were the environmental conditions (lighting, temperature, floor surface, etc.)?
	What protective equipment was provided?

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WHEN	When did the accident occur?
	When was the last inspection of the area?
	When were the hazards addressed/corrected?
	When was the person assigned to this department/area?
	When did the employee last complete training for this task?
WHY	Why was the person injured?
	Why did the person do what they did?
	Why weren't specific inspections issued?
	Why wasn't protective equipment used?
	Why weren't procedures followed?
	Why weren't the potentially unsafe conditions reported earlier?
HOW	How did the injury occur?
	How often do similar injuries occur in this area?

Photos

Physical evidence can change rapidly as time passes. Photography and video can be a practical tool for understanding the environment, position of injured person, housekeeping, and other conditions present.

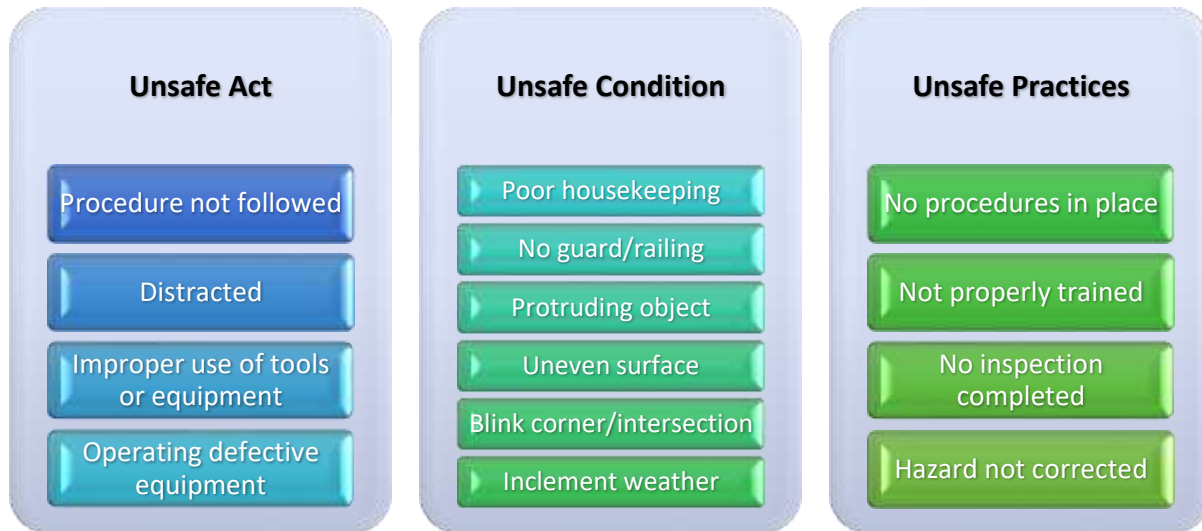
Take photos/video before anything is moved. A diagram showing the path of a bicycle, golf car, and vehicle(s), may also be beneficial in subsequent analysis and will clarify any written reports.

Analysis and Conclusions

It's important to look past the option of blaming employees or patrons involved. Keep asking "What circumstances allowed the incident to occur?" The objective is to identify key factors that lead to the incident. Often there are several.

Unfamiliarity, poor maintenance, lack of policy/procedures and untrained employees can all contribute to an accident. Look into the unsafe acts, conditions and practices that are present. Don't overlook additional sources of information such as:

- data sheets
- safety committee minutes
- inspection reports
- company policies
- maintenance reports
- past accident reports
- safe-work procedures
- training reports



Once a problem has been identified, begin asking “why” until you arrive at the root cause. (You’ll know when you’ve revealed the root cause when asking “why” produces no more useful responses.

Example:

Problem:	There have been 6 slip and fall accidents in the past 3 months in the area in front of the kitchen doors.
Why?	The floor is always slippery.
Why?	Reoccurring liquid spills by staff
Why?	Collisions in hallway to the kitchen
Why?	There is limited visibility when entering/exiting kitchen
Why?	Kitchen doors swing out into the walkway striking staff in its path ROOT CAUSE



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Be specific (rather than “eliminate blind corners” --> “install mirrors in hallway near kitchen exit”)
2. May be multi-part and over a period of time
3. Accountability (assign tasks with expected due date)
4. Re-train employees

Recommendations should not include details about discipline; keep it constructive. The intention is to remedy the situation. The recommendations may include near term fixes and longer-term solutions to the causes. Recommendations should cover the identified causes of the incident.

By incorporating these guidelines into your investigation process, your time will be better spent in arriving at root causes that may be addressed individually.

Alliant Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.