



# Practical Tips

## UNDERSTANDING INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

### Why are Incidents Investigated?

The ultimate purpose of incident investigation is to prevent future incidents.

Specific goals of an incident investigation include:

- To document the facts surrounding the occurrence of an incident
- To determine the direct causes of the incident, such as oil that was spilled on the floor
- To discover indirect causes of the incident, such as a leaking machine or oil that was spilled and not cleaned up
- To prevent a similar incident by identifying ways to improve practices and procedures, such as maintaining equipment and guards in safe condition and changing work procedures to eliminate hazards

### What Incidents Should Be Investigated?

All incidents should be investigated. Before an incident can be investigated, however, it must be reported. That means that you must report all incidents—even "near misses"—to your supervisor. "Near misses" are those incidents that could have resulted in injury or property damage, even though they did not.

Be sure to report and investigate all kinds of incidents, including:

- All incidents that result in the death of an employee, independent contractor, visitor, or member of the general public
- Accidental exposures to chemical, biological, and radiological hazards
- All incidents that result in injuries requiring medical attention
- All incidents that result in injuries requiring first aid
- All incidents that result in property damage
- All incidents that just miss causing an injury or property damage—a "near miss"
- All illnesses attributed to work-related exposures, once the causes are known



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## Reasons For Reporting All "Near Misses"

- Investigating the cause of a "near miss" might lead to preventing a future incident that could result in serious injuries, property damage, or both
- Your co-workers will be alerted to hazards they might not have been aware of
- Your company can take corrective actions to eliminate or control the cause of the "near miss"

## Tips For Being Helpful During an Incident Investigation

- Continue doing your job unless otherwise instructed by your supervisor or work team
- Stay away from the incident site unless the investigators ask you to be there
- If you witnessed the incident, try to remember as many details as possible; it's a good idea to make notes about what happened while the incident is still fresh in your mind
- Answer the interview questions honestly
- Point out hazards or factors that might have contributed to the incident

### **REMEMBER:**

The goal of incident investigation is to prevent incidents.

The process of incident investigation is:

- Determining only the facts about an incident
- Drawing conclusions about the causes of an incident based only upon supportable facts
- Developing safer ways to perform a task

In these ways, incident investigation can make your workplace safer.