

Introduction

We investigate accidents and near misses to determine what were the causes in order to correct these deficiencies and ensure such an event will not reoccur. In other words, we want to prevent any accidents & near misses from happening again.

An accident is an unplanned, uncontrolled event which causes major or minor injury to a person, causes property, animal, vehicle or environmental damage, as a result of an unsafe act and/or unsafe conditions.

A near-miss is an unplanned, uncontrolled event, which does not result in damage or injury to the person or damage to property or the environment.

Reporting of near misses is very important as their investigation and resultant corrective action can prevent accidents in the future, it makes this area more proactive rather than reactive which is the case when an accident occurs.

All accidents should be reported and investigated within 24 hours of their occurrence and should be reviewed by the show management team within a week of investigation to agree and put in place a program of corrective action. This can be done at the show management meeting.

The show chairperson and safety officer should conduct the investigation and involve other personnel as required and appropriate. The investigation form should also be completed and signed.

Where an accident results in an absence from work by the injured party for 3 consecutive days then this accident must be reported to the Health & Safety Authority online. In the event of a dangerous occurrence this must be reported to Health & Safety Authority online. Details of these requirements and to report can be got on the Health & Safety Authorities website; www.hsa.ie

Conducting an accident / near miss investigation

When to investigate

To conduct a productive accident investigation, many guidelines need to be considered. The first is that an accident should be investigated immediately, if possible. Careful judgment must be exercised when the person is upset or has sustained a serious injury. In those cases, it is probably better to wait until everyone involved has had a chance to calm down before questioning them about the accident. In general, though, you should investigate as soon as possible:

- While facts are fresh in people's minds, and the shock of the accident inclines them to be accurate;
- Before witnesses can have a chance to talk and influence each other;

- While all of the physical conditions are unchanged and persons involved are still available;
- Before memories become distorted; and
- Before excuses or second thoughts come into play.

Where to investigate

The investigation should always be made at the scene of the accident or near miss, since all of the structures, tools, materials, people and circumstances that may provide clues to the cause are present at that location.

Who should investigate?

The show chairperson and safety officer should investigate the accident or near miss, since they are in the best position to find out what happened and to make immediate changes. They want to know what happened and why, so they can prevent recurrence and ensure the safety of show officers and others.

Areas to consider

Specific areas that must be considered in a productive accident investigation include:

- The physical conditions (what and where)
- The person (who)
- The time (when)
- The method (how) and
- Other factors

Physical conditions

Was the machine properly adjusted, and/or guarded? Was it properly maintained?

Was it the right machine for the job? Was it positioned correctly?

Was it readily available?

Was it designed correctly?

Was proper material handling equipment used? Was there an equipment failure?

What caused it to fail?

Was the machine poorly designed?

Were hazardous substances involved? Were they clearly identified? Was a less hazardous substance possible or available?

Was the raw material different or substandard?

Should personal protective equipment have been used?

If you get unsatisfactory answers to any of these questions, dig deeper and find out why this is occurring.

Other questions about the physical conditions of the accident or near miss should include:

Was the area well lit?

Was the surface even, non-slippery, and in good condition? Was the area layout free of congestion?

Was the noise level high enough to be distracting or for the hazard to go undetected? Could smoke, fumes, or vapours have affected the employee's senses and contributed to the accident or near miss?

Was signage in place highlighting residual dangers or hazards?

The person

The person is one of the tougher factors to investigate and may not always lead to a specific cause. It can, however, give us much insight into additional information. Look into their placement, former instruction, experience on the job, health, physical capabilities, job attitude, length of service, and general job performance. These may all be contributing factors to an accident.

Some questions to ask of the person include:

Were workers experienced in the work being done? Had they been adequately trained?

Were they physically capable of doing the work? Were their health and eyesight all right?

Were they tired?

Were they under some stress (work or personal)?

Time

Time affects everything. It is one of the factors that we don't always measure but can add up to many pounds. Time needs to be looked at in relation to the who, how, what, and where of the accident, since it affects all those areas.

The method

Questions about the method include:

Was a safe work procedure used?

Had conditions changed to make normal procedures unsafe?

Were the appropriate tools/materials available? Were they used?

Were safety devices working properly?

Were lockout procedures used when necessary? Were safety rules in existence?

Were they being enforced?

Was there adequate supervision?

Had the hazards been previously identified? If not, why not?

If the hazards had been identified, were procedures developed to overcome the hazards?

Were unsafe conditions corrected?

Was regular maintenance of equipment carried out? Were regular safety inspections carried out?

Other factors

Other factors that can be just as significant are the time, the shift, other persons involved, unusual job conditions, one-of-a-kind seasonal jobs or short-handed conditions.

Taking witness statements

Some of the important items to keep in mind when doing the investigation and talking to witnesses or the injured party are as follows:

- don't blame anyone;
- let people talk;
- allow for personality traits;
- be specific when required;
- ask for illustrations;
- test the evidence;
- probe for all clues;
- get all sides;
- solicit ideas on how to prevent the accident or near miss from happening again.

General guidelines for effective investigation

- a) Where injuries have been sustained, make sure the injured party is properly cared for before anything else.
- b) Where practicable, preserve the scene to facilitate investigation.

Note: - In accordance with legislation on Notification of Accidents and Dangerous occurrences the following applies:

An accident is reportable to the Authority where the injured employee is unable to work for more than three consecutive days on line. Weekends and other normal days off are included when calculating the period of absence. For example, a person, who normally has Saturday and Sunday off work is injured on Wednesday and returns to work the following Monday, the incident is reportable.

In relation to non-employees, any accident where medical treatment is required must be reported

In addition, the Authority should be notified immediately (e.g. by telephone or online) when a fatal accident takes place.

Dangerous occurrences should be reported online

- c) Investigate as promptly as possible.
- d) Photographs, sketches and measurements of the scene help to paint a clearer picture.
- e) Interview all witnesses separately.
- f) Reassure each witness of investigations' real purpose, i.e. to prevent recurrence.
- g) Get witnesses initial version with minimal interruptions; ask questions to fill in gaps; have them describe and point without doing.
- h) Apply empathy in interviews; make no attempt to place blame or find fault.
- i) Be objective; don't have fixed opinions in advance.
- j) Read statement back to the witness in order to confirm understanding and accuracy, get the statement signed and give a copy to the witness.
- k) Express appreciation to everyone who helped in the investigation.
- l) Record data accurately.

Summary

Since most accidents or near misses have multiple causes, they should also have multiple corrective measures. Possible corrective actions include physical and procedural changes, training programmes, change of personal protective equipment, signage and briefings to employees & customers. Unless you **follow up** to make sure that the accident investigation reports have been routed to the interested parties and that the proper remedial action has been carried out, your job is not finished and the accident may recur.

It is also important to periodically review your past accident & near miss investigations to see if there are areas, procedures etc which require change or people who require retraining or other managerial attention. These continued reviews can also reveal problem areas or operations that need attention. Trends in frequency and severity may indicate a need for continued safety stimulation and supervision.

Investigation of an accident is an inherently serious matter. Your interest in and ability to conduct a productive investigation will be greatly enhanced when you and those co-operating with you realise the constructive reasons for the investigation, and when you are armed with the necessary specific and general information you must follow through and put the required corrective action in place.

The reporting and investigation of near misses is more proactive as you get an opportunity to take corrective action before somebody gets injured or a material loss is incurred.

Irish Shows Association Affiliated Show	Incident log (accidents & near misses)
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No.	Date	Time	Name of person involved	First aid treatment given & by whom	Further medical treatment & by whom	Brief detail on incident (what happened, reported to, witness names etc)	Accident or near miss

Irish Shows Association Affiliated Show	Accident / near miss investigation report form
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Name of person involved / injured	Show support person	
	Contractor	
	Member of public	
	Event competitor	
Address		
Occupation:		Injured party's age:
Time of the accident/near miss:		Date:
Reported to:		
Chairperson:	Steward:	Support person:
First aider:	Other:	
Medical attention given by:		
First aider:	Doctor:	Hospital:
Other:	None:	
Estimated time injured person will be out of work:		
<small>(If 3 days or more the H.S.A. must be notified online)</small>		
Show name:		
Show address:		
Phone number:		
Department / section:		
Chairperson / Safety Officer name:		
State what happened:		

State what happened cont'd:

Witness names (if any):

1: _____ 2: _____

3: _____ 4: _____

Extent of injuries:	Fatal	Serious	Moderate	Minor	None at all
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Type of injury / illness	Part of the body affected	Type of accident / incident
Amputation:	Arms/hand/fingers:	Chemical/hot substance:
Breathing/suffocation:	Back:	Electricity:
Bruising:	Chest/abdomen:	Exposure to infection:
Burn/scald:	Ears:	Falling objects:
Crush:	Eyes:	Forklift/vehicle:
Cuts:	Head/face:	Foreign bodies:
Fracture:	Leg/foot/toes:	Knives/sharp objects:
Foreign body in eye:	Neck/shoulder:	Ladders/heights:
Hearing:	Wrist:	Manual handling:
Infection/disease:	Other (state which):	Machinery/conveyors:
Rash:		Noise/dust:
Shock:		Animal:
Sprain:		Slippery surfaces:
Strain:		Ammusement machine:
Other (state):		Trips/falls:
		Other (state):

What were the causes of this accident or incident?

Immediate causes	Basic causes	Root causes

Irish Shows Association Affiliated Show	Accident / near miss investigation report form
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Was personal protective equipment:	Yes	No	Comments
Required?			
Provided?			
Worn?			
Were any of the following substandard?	Yes	No	Comments
Work practices / SOP's			
Working conditions			
Machinery / tools			
Training			
PPE			
Other ()			
Have you reviewed & updated as required?	Yes	No	Comments
Risk assessments			
Planned inspections			
Outline corrective action to be taken			Action by & date
Have you completed the following statutory forms?	Yes	No	Comments
Accident log			
H.S.A. online			
H.S.A. online			
Will a more detailed investigation be carried out?			By whom?
Have photographs been taken with a non-digital camera?			By whom?
Signed by		Position:	
		Date:	