



**INCIDENT
INVESTIGATION**





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INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

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WHY CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION?

Maximizing production is of prime concern in business operations. Production levels depend on the efficiency of operations. Operational efficiency and production can suffer unless all factors affecting production are tightly controlled to prevent operational errors. The operational errors that cause production problems are usually the same errors responsible for incidents. Addressing the conditions which caused the incident will not only prevent a recurrence, but will improve the efficiency and production of the operation.

For an investigation program to be successful, all incidents resulting in an injury requiring medical attention or significant property damage should be investigated. In addition, all “close calls,” (i.e., incidents that could have resulted in a serious injury or significant property damage) should be investigated.

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF INCIDENT INVESTIGATION?

- Discover the causes of production interruptions and indicate the corrective action to be taken.
- Prevent incident recurrence.
- Eliminate the distress and suffering caused by the incident.
- Eliminate economic losses resulting from injured employees, damaged tools, machines, property and materials.
- Discover how methods and procedures can be improved.

WHO SHOULD CONDUCT THE INVESTIGATION?

Usually, the first line supervisor should investigate incidents. *The supervisor:*

- Knows the capabilities of the employees, as well as the proper procedures for the job.
- Is able to take immediate action to prevent an incident from recurring.
- Is responsible for ensuring the existence of safe operating methods, work conditions and production.



WHEN SHOULD AN INVESTIGATION BE CONDUCTED?

While it seems obvious that incidents (and close calls) should be investigated immediately, often considerable time elapses before a thorough investigation is carried out. Incidents should be investigated immediately because:

- Facts are fresh in the minds of witnesses and those involved in the incident.
- Witnesses have not had a chance to talk and influence each other's thinking.
- All physical conditions remain the same and the people are still available.
- Quick response will show employees management's commitment to timely reporting, investigating and taking corrective action.

A report should be prepared describing the investigation in detail. All possible questions regarding the incident should be answered, and the corrective actions to prevent a recurrence listed. A sample Supervisor's Incident Investigation Report, Instructions for Completing a Report and a Sprain/Strain/Overexertion Supplement are enclosed for reference. We recommend that you develop your own reports and instructions that meet your specific needs.

WHERE SHOULD AN INVESTIGATION BE CONDUCTED?

All investigations should be made where the incident occurred unless the scene of the incident remains in a dangerous state and could pose risk to investigators and employees. At the scene of the incident are the tools, materials, machines, employees, and circumstances that give direct evidence of or clues to underlying causes. Investigations preferably should not be carried out in the hospital or medical clinic, in the supervisor's office, or in any place other than the scene of the incident.

Offending items involved in the incident, such as broken ladders, chemical bottles, failed machine parts, etc. should be retained and secured as evidence for possible future expert inspection.

WHAT SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED?

There may be a number of weaknesses in incident investigations. Too often the investigator looks only at the obvious conditions and facts; often, many related causative factors go unnoticed. Among other items, a thorough incident investigation involves exploring:

- **Unsafe practices** - departures from an accepted, normal or correct procedure.
- **Unsafe conditions** - physical defects, errors in design of equipment, tools or workstations, faulty planning, or omission of recognized safety requirements.
- **Environmental factors** - these may be better interpreted as ergonomic elements, that is, the relationship of the employee and his/her workplace environment. Examples of areas to be considered in the investigation could include noise that can dull a person's senses so he/she is not alert to sound which could warn of impending danger. Placement of controls of equipment and how they are identified could be included as well as ineffective lighting. If the incident occurs out of doors, report the weather conditions at the time of the incident. Indoor temperatures and the length of the shift may also be considered.
- **Incident agency or source of the incident** - tool, material or equipment involved in order to pinpoint the corrective action.
- **The type of incident** - manner in which the person was injured (such as by falling, by being struck by an object, or by getting caught in or between moving equipment).
- **Part of body affected** - identify all part(s) of the body that incurred injury.
- **The personal factor** - reason for the person's unsafe action or practice (such as lack of knowledge of a safe practice, disregard of instructions, physical handicap, or emotional upset).
- **Ergonomic factors** - technique, posture or motions used, frequency of the task (per minute or per hour), weights handled and distances objects are moved (lifted from/to, distances objects pushed/pulled).

IMPLEMENTING CORRECTIVE ACTION

After evaluating the facts of an incident, you may find that the incident was caused by a combination of unsafe acts and/or unsafe conditions. Recommendations to prevent a recurrence should be directed toward correcting all contributing factors leading to the incident.

Once you have developed recommendations designed to correct all contributing factors, your report should be submitted to top management. After the report has been submitted, it is very important to follow up with those people involved to be sure that recommended changes have taken place. Given that reports may contain personal medical or other confidential information, care should be taken to ensure reports are distributed and maintained in a secure environment, with access only provided to those who need to know the information.

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Supervisor's Incident Investigation Report

AN INCIDENT INVESTIGATION IS NOT DESIGNED TO FIND FAULT OR BLAME. IT IS AN ANALYSIS TO DETERMINE CAUSES THAT CAN BE CONTROLLED OR ELIMINATED.

* For soft tissue injuries see the Sprain, Strain and Overexertion Supplement

WHEN COMPLETING THE INVESTIGATION, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- ✓ People
- ✓ Equipment
- ✓ Material
- ✓ Environment

- Who was involved?
- Was the employee trained for this task?
- Were the proper equipment & materials chosen?
- Were the equipment & materials used correctly?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- What were the conditions of the area at the time?

See next page for more sample questions.

Consider including photos, sketches, etc.

FOLLOW-UP:

Determine what action is being taken on your recommendations.

Employee: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Position: _____ Date Employed: _____

Department: _____ Supervisor: _____

How Long Was Employee Performing This Operation? _____

Nature and Extent of Injury?*

Was First Aid Given & By Whom? _____

Date Injury Reported: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Equipment Involved: _____

Material Involved: _____

Environmental Conditions: _____

How Did Incident Occur? _____

Cause(s) of Incident: _____

Recommendations To Prevent A Recurrence: _____

What Action Has Been Taken? _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SUPERVISOR'S INCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

- 1. Background Information:** Fill in the employee name, date & time of the incident, employee's position, department, supervisor and date first employed by the company.
- 2. How Long Was Employee Performing This Operation?** This will help to determine the experience of the employee and could identify placement or training issues.
- 3. Nature and Extent of Injury?** Note the body part & type of injury. For overexertions, note when the symptoms first appeared. If this is an aggravation of a pre-existing injury, briefly describe circumstances of the original injury. For soft tissue injuries refer to the Strain/Sprain/Overexertion Supplement.
- 4. Was First Aid Given & By Whom?** Was 911 called? Did company personnel provide treatment, or transportation to a local clinic? Etc.
- 5. Date Injury Reported:** Employees should report all injuries immediately. If there was a delay, find out why.
- 6. Location of Incident:** Be specific - workstation, department, jobsite, etc.
- 7. PEME (People, Equipment, Material, Environment):** When an incident occurs, the cause is most likely a combination of these four factors. First, list the specific equipment, material and environmental conditions involved. Then consider items from the table below when identifying the cause(s). *For example:*

People – What, if any, instructions had been provided for the task? Were they just filling in for another employee? Were they physically able to do the job? Who else was present?

Equipment - Was the proper ladder used for the job? Was the table saw properly guarded? Did the truck have the appropriate preventative maintenance?

Material - Was the workstation arranged to minimize reaching for the parts? Is there a lighter weight box available? Can the process be automated to reduce the amount of lifting?

Environment - What precautions were taken for working outside in the hot weather? Was the area free of tripping hazards? Was the best route selected to avoid congested traffic areas? Is the area well lit?

PEOPLE	EQUIPMENT	MATERIAL	ENVIRONMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Individual differences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience • Learning • Personal limitations • Attitudes • Conflict ✓ Communication ✓ Training ✓ Peer pressure ✓ Supervision ✓ Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ General condition ✓ Preventative maintenance ✓ Proper equipment for the job ✓ Proper operation ✓ Regular inspection ✓ Component failures ✓ Examples: <i>Hand tools, machines, guards, motor vehicles, ladders, PPE, material handling devices, motor vehicles, etc.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Arrangement ✓ Storage ✓ Selection ✓ Size ✓ Weight ✓ Procedures for use ✓ Handling ✓ Examples: <i>Paper, pipe, wiring, wood, sand, gravel, powders, liquids, paints, chemicals, etc.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Temperature ✓ Visibility ✓ Work Area ✓ Housekeeping ✓ Congestion ✓ Rushed atmosphere ✓ Scheduling ✓ Route Selection ✓ Peak season

- 8. How Did Incident Occur?** Describe what happened taking into account PEME.
- 9. Cause(s) of Incident:** Think about the PEME factors noted above. Consider also the “W” questions”...
 - **Why** is the task being performed necessary?
 - **When** should it be done? Should it be re-scheduled?
 - **Who** is best qualified to do the job?
 - **What** useful purpose does it serve? Can it be eliminated?
 - **Where** should it be done? Should the workstation be re-arranged?
 - **How** can it be done better, easier, safer?
- 10. Recommendations to Prevent a Recurrence:** Using what you have learned, list the corrective action needed. Brainstorm with others if needed.
- 11. What Action Has Been Taken?** Include what has been done and when. Note future dates for follow up as needed to verify the corrections are effective and still in place.

- SUGGESTIONS:**
- Interview all witnesses and ask what recommendations they might have to prevent recurrence.
 - Record fact, not opinions.
 - Check files for previous similar incidents.
 - Review all relevant reports regarding equipment/vehicle maintenance.
 - Take photographs.
 - Secure any evidence (faulty parts, broken ladder, etc.).



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Strain/Sprain/Overexertion Supplement

Name: _____ Department: _____

Date Symptoms Were First Noticed: _____

1. Did the pain develop gradually or did you feel it all of a sudden? _____
2. Is this a problem that comes and goes? _____

SUDDEN

3. What were you doing when the pain was felt? _____

4. Have you done this before? _____ How often? _____
5. When you felt pain, were you doing the task the way you usually do? _____
6. Did anything unusual or unexpected happen? _____ Please explain _____

7. If not, how do you think the pain was caused? _____

GRADUAL

8. When did you first notice pain was coming on? _____
9. What had you been doing that you feel caused the pain to develop? _____

10. How long or how many times did you do this? _____
11. Have you ever done this before? _____ How often? _____
12. Were you doing it the usual way you do it? _____
If not, what was different? _____
13. Except for the pain that developed, do you remember anything unusual or unexpected that happened? _____
14. If not, what do you think has caused this pain? _____

RECURRENT

15. What kind of activity seems to bring on the pain? _____

16. How often does this problem occur? _____
17. Have you discussed this problem with your doctor? _____

GENERAL

18. Do you have any suggestions on how the company can help you avoid problems of this kind in the future? Please explain. _____

Supervisor: _____

Date: _____



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Supervisor's Incident Investigation Report

(Sample – Completed Report)

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- Who was involved?
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- Were the proper equipment & materials chosen?
- Were the equipment & materials used correctly?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- What were the conditions of the area at the time?

See next page for more sample questions.

Consider including photos, sketches, etc.

FOLLOW-UP:

Determine what action is being taken on your recommendations.

Employee: John Doe Date: 06/10/09 Time: 2:30
 Position: Driver Date Employed: 07/11/08
 Department: Public Works Supervisor: Pete Smith
 How Long Was Employee Performing This Operation? 3 months
 Nature and Extent of Injury? * Fractured right arm

Was First Aid Given & By Whom? I immobilized the arm and drove John to the hospital.

Date Injury Reported: 06/10/09

Location of Incident: Parking lot adjacent to Highway garage

Equipment Involved: Dump truck, garden hose

Material Involved: Dirt, Sand

Environmental Conditions: Sunny, temperatures were in the 50's

How Did Incident Occur? John was washing dirt and sand from the truck at the end of the shift. He climbed onto the fender to wash the top of the truck. He slipped and fell, subsequently breaking his arm. He wore older sneakers, which had very little tread on them.

Cause(s) of Incident: 1. Difficult to reach all areas of the truck with just a garden hose. 2. Fender was slippery from the water. 3. He wore sneakers, which provided little traction, instead of the department required work boots.

Recommendations To Prevent A Recurrence: 1. Use an extension on the hose to reach elevated areas. This will avoid the need to climb on the truck, minimizing reaching which could strain the shoulders and save time. 2. Investigate the use of an elevated platform. 3. Require (and enforce) the use of work boots while on the job.

What Action Has Been Taken? 1. A four foot extension has been ordered for the hose. 2. Assigned the task of investigating the elevated platforms to the Assistant Superintendent. This will be further discussed at the July Safety Committee Meeting. 3. Reminded all employees on the footwear policy requiring boots.

Signed: Pete Smith Date: 06/10/09



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