

# INCIDENT INVESTIGATION



## What is an incident?

An incident is an unplanned event that has resulted in, or has the potential to result in, injury, illness, damage or loss. An incident can include accidents and 'near misses'.

## Why do we need to investigate incidents?

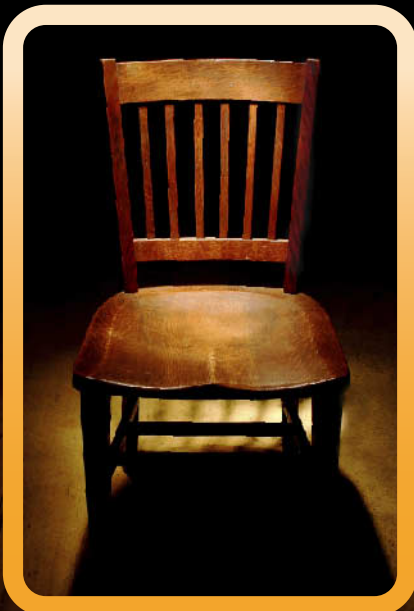
OHS legislation requires employers to take steps to provide a safe place of work. An incident serves to highlight a risk in the work environment. If you do not investigate the incident to try and minimise the risk, you will be in breach of the OHS laws.

## How to investigate incidents?

**Don't blame me!** Incident investigation is not about laying blame. Rather you need to look for failures in your OHS Management System. You need to:

1. Secure the scene
2. Gather information
3. Prepare a written report
4. Act on recommendations

## INTERVIEW TIPS



Part of your investigation will involve interviewing the injured person, witnesses and others involved in the task. It is important to make these people feel comfortable. They are not on trial! Your interview techniques can make a difference in setting them at ease and the quality of information you receive.

- Interview people at the scene of the incident - this may help to jog their memory and allows them to point out physical features.
- Conduct the interview in private. If the scene is a busy spot, choose a quiet time.
- Put the interviewee at ease - remind them you are looking for system failures not someone to blame.
- Ask for the interviewee's version of events - do not interrupt or ask leading questions. Let them finish first.
- Use open-ended questions and stick to facts - who, what, where, and when.
- Wait until all facts have been given before asking 'why' questions.
- Repeat the events back to ensure you have understood.
- Thank them for their help.



## INCIDENT INVESTIGATION INFORMATION

When investigating an incident the type of information you need / questions you should ask are:

- What was the sequence of events?
- What was the injury, illness, damage or loss?
- Who was injured?
- Who else was involved in the task?
- Who saw what happened?
- Where did the incident occur?
- What task was being undertaken?
- What equipment was being used?
- Were safe work procedures followed?
- Have there been previous similar incidents?
- What training had been provided?
- What safety information was available to the injured person?

The answers to these questions lead us to the big question...**WHY?**

- Why did the injury occur?
- Why was there no safe work procedure?
- Why was training not provided?
- Why were conditions not safe?
- Why was the hazard not assessed?

From this investigation, you will be able to draw conclusions which should be included in your report:

- What systems failed?
- Who failed to follow the system?
- Why did they fail to follow the system (eg time pressures)?
- What parts of the system triggered the accident?
- What could be done as an alternative?

Your report should also include proposed actions to correct the problem and an implementation schedule.

## CASE STUDY

### Inspector Kenneth Kumar v Soars and Anor [2006] NSWIRComm 193

On 19 November 2003, a 15 year old employed by a green recycling company was involved in an incident. While cleaning a moving conveyor, his right arm became caught. His arm was severed from the shoulder. He had been working for the company for a little over a month.

When WorkCover NSW investigated the incident they found:

- the physical environment included a grinder/mulcher, stockpile of green waste, crates, waste build up under a pulley, location of electrical switches, absences of labelling on equipment and switches etc.
- the young worker's training consisted of watching others clean the equipment
- he had not cleaned this particular piece of equipment prior to the incident
- his only verbal instruction was to "watch out and be careful"
- other employees had not received formal training on cleaning the equipment
- there was no written safe work procedure for the task
- guards installed on the equipment were not designed to prevent access
- the installation of the conveyor system did not comply with Australian Standards
- risk assessments were carried out in July and September which did not make reference to Australian Standards
- recommendations made in the risk assessments, including appropriate guarding and isolator switches, induction, training and procedures manuals, were not acted on.



Do you have work experience students or maintenance staff using grinder / mulchers?

How safe are your people?

## NEED HELP?

Call OHS Solutions  
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