Investigating Workplace Incidents: An Overview

Welcome

Good [incident investigation](#) keeps us focused on facts and understanding of multiple causes. It examines and determines immediate and root causes, and always includes a corrective action plan to prevent reoccurrences.

Today we'll discuss:

- the "nuts and bolts" of investigating,

- the alignment of immediate and root causes,

- how corrective action and prevention go together,

- follow up and monitoring for continuing safety, and

- [resources for your support](#).

Nature, Methods, Outcomes of Investigations

- Reactive - in response to an event
- Proactive - in response to an identified need

- Time sensitive
- Finding immediate <u>and</u> root causes
- Objective and clear: fact - not fault - finding

- Collaborative and cooperative
- <u>Preventative and remedial; results in change</u>

For proper and timely incident investigation, employers must ensure:

- Clear plans
- Ready action
- Ongoing follow up

This includes understanding needed roles and measures:

- Provincial obligations
- Federal obligations
- Industry practices
- Programs or plans
- Forms
- Training
- Safety leadership

Steps for an effective investigation:

1. Emergency response

2. Secure and notify

3. Investigate

4. Prepare report

5. Implement corrective actions

6. Evaluate and monitor

Investigating Kits: ready to go!

Should <u>always</u> have:

- Report forms, graph paper, clipboard, pens and pencils
- Procedure 'cue card'
- Contacts list
- Access to a digital camera
- Flashlight
- Fresh batteries
- Tape measure (30m)
- Gloves (work & disposable)
- Cardboard tags
- Inspection mirrors

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Can also have:

- High visibility barrier items
- Barricade tape
- Straight ruler
- Audio recorder
- Protective booties
- Adhesive Labels
- Marking pencil/crayon
- Portable shovel
- Evidence containers

Gathering evidence

Two main types of evidence:

- Physical evidence: damaged and non-damaged items, photographs of visible damage, security footage, impact points, info plates, etc. , and

- Documentary evidence: testimony, training records, inspection and investigation reports, policies, work procedures, etc.

Other types that could apply to your site?

Talking / interviewing with witnesses:

Do:

- Interview separately and in an appropriate setting

- Be calm; show empathy

- Ask them to describe their experience

- Listen fully; ask open questions, eg. "What happened next?"

- Confirm understanding of statements

- Keep lines of communication open

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Don't:
- Infer or state blame
- Show them anger, frustration
- Interview in groups
- Interrupt witness's account
- Use leading questions
- "Put words in their mouth"
- Ignore them by concentrating solely on note-taking

Coordinating and Analyzing Information

Use PEMEP as guide to note actions/states of:
- **P**eople
- **E**quipment
- **M**aterials
- **E**nvironment
- **P**rocess

List immediate causes
Conditions/acts that immediately led to the contact.

List root causes
Conditions/acts that allow immediate causes to exist.

Example	Before	During	After
People			
Equipment			
Materials			
Environment			
Process			

Fall in parking lot	Before	During	After
People	Staff arriving for work 30 minutes early	7:30am Slipped on ice, breaking wrist	Additional staff attended to injured party, called ambulance
Equipment	Salt spreading equipment available	Not used	Salt spread
Materials	Salt available	Not used	Salt effective in controlling hazard
Environment	Ice on parking lot, Cold weather; Lighting poor (before sunrise)	Unchanged	Temperature higher, salt effective, sunrise brightened area
Process	Maintenance not on until 8:00am	Called in early to control situation	Shift changed to have one member of crew arrive ½ hour early to salt and one to stay ½ hour later

Preparing an investigation report

<u>General outline:</u>
- Describe the event and actions
- Describe immediate causes
- Describe basic ('root') causes
- Describe corrective actions
        - done since event
        - to be done
- Required timelines

Employer evaluates, signs, implements, and does follow-up.

Depending on nature of event, reports may have to be submitted to outside regulatory agencies.

Implementation and follow up

Management's role is critical to ensure successful remediation and ongoing prevention.

• Implement actions and follow up to validate

• Reassess and correct outstanding issues

• Monitor for continuous improvement

• Ensure ongoing communication and training

Use Cost Calculator to further explore investigations!

Wrap Up

Proper investigations keep us focused on fact-finding, not fault-finding. Investigation procedure *always* includes measures and methods that are:

- Reactive - in response to an event
- Proactive - in response to an identified need
- Time sensitive
- Objective and clear
- Seeking and analyzing immediate **and** root cause
- Collaborative and cooperative
- Preventative and remedial with corrective actions
- Include required follow up and ongoing monitoring

Investigating Incidents: References & Resources

WCB Nova Scotia www.worksafeforlife.ca   and   www.wcb.ns.ca
Call toll-free   Halifax 1-800-870-3331   and   Sydney 1-800-880-0003

Small Business Safety Toolkit   and   Small Business Safety Toolkit Cost Calculator

Nova Scotia OHS Division www.novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety
View OHS News - www.gov.ns.ca/lae/healthandsafety/ohsnews.asp
Email   ohsdivision@gov.ns.ca
Call toll-free: Nova Scotia 1-800-952-2687 or 902-424-5400

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Nova Scotia Labour and Advanced Education & CCOHS E-Learning Portal