

STAY SAFE WITH SOCIETY



HOW TO INVESTIGATE AN ACCIDENT

The primary focus of all work environments should be to prevent accidents. When accidents do happen, we must investigate them to understand how to prevent recurrence. To conduct a successful investigation you will need to observe the scene, interview victims and witnesses, evaluate the facts, and determine the root causes to understand how the accident occurred. It is important to remember that an investigation is a **fact**-finding and not a **fault**-finding activity. Your goal is to understand the chain of events, how it happened, why it happened, and what must be done to prevent another employee injury from the same cause.

Root causes contribute to the occurrence of an accident. Root causes fall into four broad categories:

- **Environment:** Was there a hazard or danger in the work environment (i.e., hot, cold, dusty, dark, slippery, etc.)?
- **Material:** Was the accident caused by contact with or exposure to material(s)?
- **People and Procedures:** Did a procedure dictate the behavior of people involved in the accident or was the behavior reckless outside the parameters of standard procedures?
- **Equipment:** Is the equipment defective and/or was there complete failure?

Here are the basic steps in the accident investigation process:

- First, determine if anyone needs immediate medical treatment.
- As soon as possible after the accident, get the names of victims, witnesses, and anyone who can provide relevant information (people who work in the area and those who assisted at the scene).
- If possible, take pictures of the unaltered scene.
- Conduct one-on-one interviews in a private, neutral setting.
- Question the victim as soon as possible; facts will be clearer and more accurate.
- Ask open-ended questions (ones that can't be answered yes or no). Be careful not to ask leading questions.
- Document everything. Have interviewees read your notes and sign off; if possible, it is best to have the victims and witnesses write and diagram the incident in their own handwriting.
- Analyze all of the information gathered to get beyond the obvious and determine the root cause(s).
- Develop, implement, and track corrective action items to completion.

**AN INVESTIGATION IS AN
ACTIVITY DESIGNED TO
FIND FACTS, NOT FAULT.**

A Small Detail
That Can Make a
Big Difference.

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