

HOW TO CONDUCT AN INJURY INVESTIGATION

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Interview the worker who had the injury.

- a. Put the person at ease. The best way to do this is by reminding them that the purpose is to find out what happened so that the same thing won't happen again to them or other employees. A friendly and understanding manner is necessary in gaining cooperation.
- b. Conduct the investigation at the scene of the injury whenever possible. It will help the person explain and you to understand. Make it as private as possible.
- c. Ask for their version of the injury. Be sure the person understands that you want their version as they saw it and not dressed up for your benefit. Do not interrupt to clarify or interpret or to evaluate the explanation. Wait until they finish before you ask any questions.
- d. Ask any necessary questions. The key word is necessary. Limit them to questions of facts and do not made any judgmental remarks.

Ask questions that will help you understand:

1. What was done.
2. How it was done.
3. What happened.

Do not ask "why" type questions ("Why were you doing it that way?"), as they may tend to make the worker defensive.

Ask questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer.

- e. Repeat the story as you understood it.

This serves two purposes. First, it assures correct understanding by allowing the worker to be sure that you understand what was meant, not just what was said.

Second, it gives the worker a chance to hear what they said. Strangely enough, most of us do not listen to ourselves when we talk. Through the advantage of your feedback, the worker has a chance to make corrections and supply additional information.

- f. Close the interview on a positive note. Ask for their suggestions to eliminate this type of injury and thank them for their cooperation.

RE-ENACTMENT OF INJURIES

Sometimes it is beneficial to have the worker demonstrate the steps leading up to the injury to determine WHAT was being done and HOW it was done.

- a. When it can supply information that can't be obtained in any other way.
- b. When it will aid in determining preventive action.
- c. When it is necessary to verify information given by a witness or victim regarding the injury.

If you decide to re-enact the situation, certain precautions must be taken to avoid repetition.

- a. Make sure the worker understands they are to go through the motions, but not to repeat the actual unsafe act that caused the injury. Watch them closely the entire time to be sure they are not in danger.
- b. Tell them to demonstrate in **slow motion** and to explain each step while they are doing it. This will reduce the chances of another injury and it will help you better understand what happened.
- c. Be certain they are emotionally fit and does not object to the re-enactment.

FACTORS TO ASSIST YOU IN THE COMPLETION OF THE SUPERVISOR INJURY INVESTIGATION REPORT

1. ***Equipment, object, and substance causing injury*** Hit by pallet jack, struck by broken spring from roll up door, sprayed lubricant in eye etc.
2. ***Description of what happened*** The following should be considered to determine the factors that may have contributed to the injury:
 - a. Where did it happen? This is important if the cause of the injury is directly related to the location.
 - b. What inflicted the injury. This means object, tool, equipment or substance involved in the injury.
 - c. Who had the most control over the thing that inflicted the injury? This may or may not be the injured worker.

For example, an injury in which a worker is struck by a moving cart or forklift, the control of the cart or forklift is under someone other than the injured person.

- d. A step-by-step account of all events leading up to the injury or contributing toward the injury should be stated.
7. **Analysis** Why did it happen? This is the same thing as saying what caused the injury. Few injuries have a single cause. There are usually multiple causes and contributing factors involved and as many as possible must be found.
 8. **Unsafe acts and hazardous conditions**

Injury causes can be classified as **immediate** and **basic**. The immediate cause is usually the most apparent. An example would be the electrical extension cord which tripped a worker. Identifying only the immediate cause, in this case, the extension cord, is a common failing in injury investigations. By “back tracking” from the immediate cause you might find the basic cause for the injury.

In the case of the extension cord, your “back tracking” might reveal:

- a. The cord was across the aisle because it was not connected to its regular outlet.
- b. It was not connected to its regular outlet because that outlet was broken.
- c. It was broken while unloading material from a truck.
- d. It was struck by material because it was improperly positioned on the face of an I-beam.

The “back tracking” we have just gone through only shows one-half of the picture because an injury is a mishap caused by an unsafe act of an employee as well as an unsafe physical condition.

It is necessary to determine the basic unsafe act of an employee before proper remedial action can be applied.

There are:

- a. Lack of knowledge or training for the job.
- b. Improper work attitude
- c. Physical or mental handicap. This could be a temporary or a permanent handicap.