Near-Misses Matter: Building a Culture That Reports and Learns Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. **Uncontrolled Hazards Persist:** When near-misses go unreported, the same unsafe condition remains in place until it causes an injury or fatality.
2. **Normalization of Risk:** Repeated close calls can make dangerous conditions feel “normal,” increasing tolerance for hazards and reducing corrective action.
3. **Hidden System Failures:** Near-misses often reveal gaps in procedures, training, equipment maintenance, or supervision that aren’t visible after routine inspections.
4. **Time-Pressure Suppression:** Rushed work and productivity demands discourage reporting, allowing hazards to escalate without intervention.
5. **Fear of Blame:** Workers may avoid reporting near-misses if they expect discipline or criticism, delaying fixes that could prevent serious harm.
6. **Loss of Learning Opportunity:** Each unreported near-miss is a missed chance to improve controls before injuries occur.

STATS

- A U.S. safety culture survey found that over 60% of workers had experienced a near-miss they did not report, most often due to time pressure or fear of blame.
- Canadian safety audits indicate that near-miss reporting increases by over 50% in workplaces that adopt no-blame reporting policies and supervisor follow-up (CCOHS).
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports millions of nonfatal workplace injuries annually in the U.S., with safety investigations frequently identifying prior near misses that were not reported or addressed.
- In Canada, a 2022 survey by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering revealed that 58% of workers believed reporting a near-miss would negatively affect their job or reputation, contributing to underreporting.
- In the US, workplaces experience approximately 3 billion near-misses (close calls) annually, with the classic Heinrich pyramid ratio indicating for every serious injury, there are about 300 near-misses and 29 minor injuries.
- Organizations with formal near-miss programs in North America report 25% fewer serious accidents within two to three years, per 2025 safety benchmarks, through trend analysis and corrective actions.