

# Incident Investigations

BHHC Loss Control

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# Objectives

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- Why recording and reporting incidents are important
- Purpose of an incident investigation
- What to investigate
- Why incidents should be investigated
- How and When to investigate an incident

# Why Recording and Reporting Incidents are Important



# It is the Law

- All injuries must be reported no matter how trivial if medical treatment is sought
- Labor Code Section 6409.1 (a) – Requires employers to report claims within 5 days
- Employers are required to authorize an initial medical evaluation within 24 hour of knowledge that an injury has occurred, regardless of legitimacy of the claim.

# Immediate Reporting Allows

1

For employees to receive immediate attention

2

Timely investigation (preservation of evidence, prevention of the loss of critical information)

3

Medical and disability management (decreased disability duration, lower costs for all involved)

## Managers and Supervisor need to:

- Report claims to insurance carrier
- Complete internal reports in detail
- Pre-select medical clinics/hospitals
- Investigate all incidents and correct work practices and process

## Employees Need to:

- Promptly report all near-misses, incidents, injuries, and hazards, no matter how minor

# Prevent it from Repeating

To keep employees safe by preventing the incident, near-miss, near-hit, or hazard from occurring again

- Find the root cause
- Document
- Follow-up

# What is the purpose of an incident investigation?

To find facts that can lead to actions, not to find fault

# What Should be Investigated?

- Investigate beyond the obvious
- Death and serious injuries
- Injury
- Property loss
- Near-miss (aka near-hit) incidents
- Hazardous conditions

# Why Incidents Should be Investigated



To prevent it from  
happening again



Fact finding



Trend finding



Hazard identification and  
controls

# Hazard Identification and Controls

Hazards are any unsafe condition(s) that, if left uncontrolled, may contribute to an incident



Hazards have two components

Human component:  
human action or inaction

Physical component: non-  
human



Controls eliminate out, engineer out, and/or administrative reduce the hazard risk

# Who investigates an incident?

- Technical Knowledge – can choose the best methodology (Root Cause Analysis, 5 Whys, Fault Tree Analysis, etc.)
- Is familiar with relevant regulations and standards
- Knows workplace processes, equipment, hazards
- Thinks analytically and critically
- Has good interviewing and communication skills
- Is objective and ethical
- Can problem solve and plan corrective actions
- Understands human and organizational factors
- Can work with others (team player and collaborator)
- Can write clean, comprehensive, and evidence-based reports

# How to Investigate an Incident

- Have a plan
- Take immediate action
- Protect, secure, and examine the incident site
- Preserve and document evidence
- Identify witnesses
- Conduct interviews
- Document findings

| Investigation Type | When to Use                                                     | Characteristics                                                                                                                                        | Example Tools                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Simple             | Minor Injury<br>Low-risk near miss<br>Property damage           | Clear cause<br>Minimal impact<br>No system failure<br>One investigator<br>Short investigation time expected                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative form</li> <li>• 5 Whys</li> <li>• Basic Checklist</li> <li>• Reason Swiss Cheese</li> </ul>                                                |
| Moderate           | Recordable Injury<br>High-potential near miss                   | More than one contributing cause<br>Human, physical, and technical elements<br>Possible regulatory involvement<br>Moderate investigation time expected | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeline</li> <li>• Fishbone (Ishikawa), an enhanced 5 Whys</li> <li>• Causal Tree</li> <li>• Management Oversight &amp; Risk Tree (MORT)</li> </ul> |
| Complex            | Fatality<br>Disabling Injury<br>Major impact<br>Repeated hazard | Team (multi- and cross-functioning)<br>Systemic failure<br>Organizational factors<br>External stakeholders<br>Long investigation time expected         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECF Chart</li> <li>• Logic Tree</li> <li>• Bowtie</li> <li>• RCA (Root Cause Analysis)</li> </ul>                                                    |

# Investigating an Incident

Incidents usually have more than one cause

| Unsafe Acts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Unsafe Conditions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operating equipment without authority</li><li>• Failure to warn</li><li>• Failure to secure</li><li>• Operating at improper speed</li><li>• Making safety devices inoperable or removing them</li><li>• Using defective equipment</li><li>• Failing to use PPE properly</li><li>• Improper loading</li><li>• Improper placement</li><li>• Improper lifting</li><li>• Improper position of task</li><li>• Servicing equipment in operation</li><li>• Horseplay</li><li>• Under influence of alcohol and/or other drugs</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate guards and barriers</li><li>• Inadequate or improper protective equipment</li><li>• Defective tools, equipment or materials</li><li>• Congestion or restricted action</li><li>• Inadequate warning system</li><li>• Fire and explosion hazards</li><li>• Poor housekeeping, disorder</li><li>• Noise exposure</li><li>• Radiation exposure</li><li>• Temperature extremes</li><li>• Inadequate or excess illumination</li><li>• Inadequate ventilation</li></ul> |

# The Incident Site

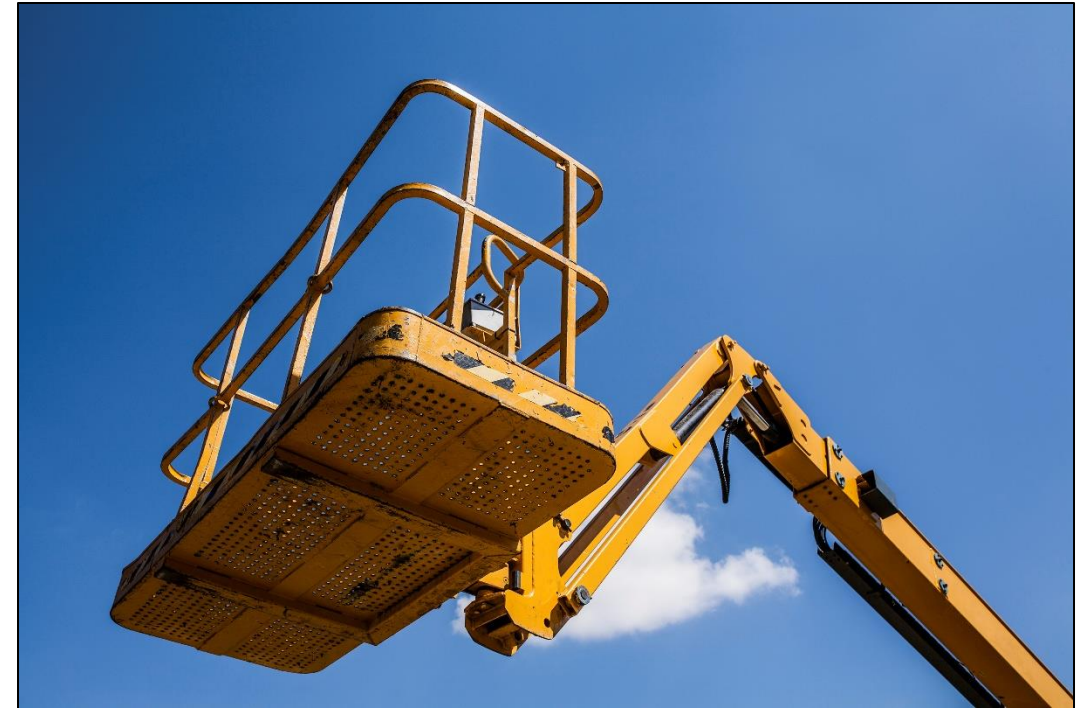
Protect, secure, and examine the incident site. For example, based on your knowledge of the work process check items such as:

- Positions of injured workers
- Equipment, materials, items or chemicals being used
- Safety devices in use
- Position of appropriate guards

# The Incident Site

## Check:

- Position of controls of machinery
- Damage to equipment
- Housekeeping of area
- Weather conditions
- Lighting levels
- Noise levels
- Time of day





# Evidence

In addition to preserving the incident site you may have to gather:

- Items or equipment that may have contributed to the incident
- Technical data/ repair-maintenance records
- Safety committee minutes and/or training records
- Inspection reports
- Past incident/incident investigation reports
- Company policies and safe work procedures

# Interviews



# Interviewing Witnesses

Be prepared to interview (in this order):

- Anyone directly involved in the incident
- Eyewitnesses
- Anyone who knows or heard something about the incident
- Anyone with technical information or knowledge about the conditions that may have contributed to the incident

# Best Practice

When conducting interviews, it is best to:

1. Interview witnesses one at a time
2. Interview them in private
3. Start the interviews as soon as possible
4. Conduct them at the incident site, if possible

# Just the Facts!

- Reenact, if possible but don't recreate
- Open-ended questions...require an answer other than yes or no
- Do not interrupt
- Be a good listener!
- Restate the info-clarify
- Ask if it is ok to record the interview
- Try to sense their feelings
- Close on a positive note



# When Asking Questions

- Rephrase the questions if the witness fails to answer
- Clarify if you do not understand
- Give them time to answer- try not to prompt or lead them to an answer
- Don't intimidate the witness or show your own emotions
- Don't jump to conclusions or finish their thoughts/sentences

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a dark pen, writing on a piece of paper. The background is out of focus, showing more of the document and possibly some office supplies.

# Documentation

Always document your incident investigations in a report.

- Complete your report as soon as possible so the information is fresh
- If writing by hand, make sure it is legible
- Ask employees to clarify their handwritten statements if necessary
- Include photos, witness statements, etc.
- Include specific recommendations, action items, and abatement dates for follow-up
- Keep the report on file

# Case Study: Why did Suzi almost fall?

Suzi almost fell:

- She was a new administrative assistant to a Regional Manager
- She worked in a downtown Chicago high-rise
- She was moving 3 banker's boxes to the underground garage storage area
- It was 4:45 p.m. in late December
- The hallways on her floor in her building were being renovated
- The custodian service workers were on break
- Two of her coworkers were about to go on vacation for the holidays

# What Factors Increased the Risk?

- New administrative assistant to a Regional Manager: Did she feel pressure to work harder and impress the boss? Was she still in orientation?
- Downtown Chicago high-rise with floors being renovated: Did she have to use the stairs?
- Moving 3 banker's boxes downstairs: Did the stacked boxes block her vision?
- Late December in the Midwest: Dark outside, how was the lighting? Was she tired?
- Custodians on break: Did they leave the floors waxed? Signage?
- Coworkers about to go on vacation: Was she rushed to cover their work? Distracted? They were unable to assist?



# Preventative Measures

- Ensure all employees follow the dress code, including safe footwear
- Ensure employees know which stairs and elevators to use during construction – check the condition of the stairs
- Instruct managers to provide a safe working environment for employees, and provide safe working conditions
- Instruct employees not to block their vision when carrying items, and to ask for help.
- Ensure the building has proper lighting
- Ensure vendors like custodians work proper hours and use proper signage
- Check with employees to ensure holiday workloads are manageable, and that they are not distracted



# Questions?

Please email additional questions to [losscontrol@bhhc.com](mailto:losscontrol@bhhc.com)