



National Forklift Safety Day – What to do in the event of an incident

For the final part of our National Forklift Safety Day campaign 'What to do in the event of an incident', we look at a key aspect of accident/incident prevention process, Near Miss reporting. This is sometimes referred to as 'good catch' or 'close call'.

This type of reporting depends on an incident happening, so we also need to include additional reporting elements, including unsafe situations, conditions and circumstances that do not result in an incident of any type.

Encourage: Make reporting easy and rewarding.

Involve: Ask for input from everyone involved and provide feedback.

Investigate: What happened and why. Dig deeper to find out what really went wrong.

Act: Implement change, inform staff, and provide training.

Review: Are people following the process, did changes make improvements, is there a pattern?

Improve: Focus on improving systems and procedures, rather than blaming individuals.





Near miss meaning

There is often confusion around the meaning of a 'near miss'. A near miss is classed as an unplanned event which has happened and not resulted in injury, property damage or loss of any type.

Examples:

1. A forklift (FLT) is in operation in a warehouse. A pedestrian is almost struck by the FLT and only evasive action taken by the FLT operator avoids a collision.
2. A forklift engineer is working in a transport yard and has the truck jacked up. Whilst the engineer is in their service vehicle, an HGV almost strikes the FLT potentially knocking it off the jack or hitting the engineer had they been working on the FLT at the time

(Accident definition: an unplanned event that results in injury, damage or loss)

Unsafe condition, situation or circumstance

This is an unsafe situation present in the workplace:

Examples:

1. A blocked pedestrian walkway through a warehouse or transport yard.
2. A FLT engineer being asked to work in an unsuitable area such as an emergency exit route.
3. Warehouse racking legs showing signs of structural damage.



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Why near misses/unsafe circumstances should always be reported

It is recognised that reporting of such incidents helps prevent real accidents – those resulting in injury or property damage. If we can report, investigate thoroughly and implement corrective actions/control measures, more serious incidents can be prevented. Conservative research suggests that for every 300 near misses, there is one serious accident. Elsewhere, research articles and figures show comparisons between near misses and accidents.

Taking early action can prevent consequences becoming more serious.

This type of reporting should be part of an effective Health & Safety (H&S) Management system. If implemented properly an effective reporting system helps demonstrate a positive safety culture within an organisation.

Reporting of this nature helps identify trends and patterns which may identify weaknesses in the management systems such as risk assessment process and/or safe systems of work.

There is no legal requirement to report 'near miss' incidents, however steps should be taken to ensure such incidents do not fall within the criteria of RIDDOR's 'Dangerous Occurrence' categories (87 in total), which can be found in Schedule 2 of RIDDOR.

Example:

1. The collapse, overturn or failure of a load-bearing part of lifting equipment.

Results from an investigation of these reports may result in changes to risk assessments, safe systems of work and other areas of the H&S Management system.





How to get employees involved

It is easy to implement a system of reporting, however, difficulties can arise when getting employees to report such incidents. Employees often see such incidents as trivial or they may feel embarrassed about reporting them as poor management can develop a finger-pointing attitude and a blame culture. It should be noted that if such an incident has happened to one employee, it is very likely that it has happened to others.

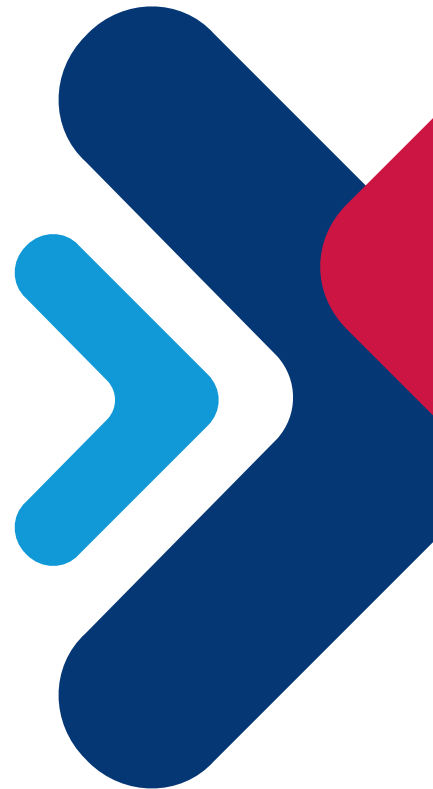
Employees may also face peer pressure or feel like they are putting their colleagues at risk of disciplinary action if they report something their colleague might be doing that could be considered unsafe or not following a safe system of work.

Therefore, the ideal model for good management is a process where all employees are encouraged to report such incidents without blame.

The reporting process should be made as easy and simple as possible. If employees see that numerous forms need to be filled in, they are less likely to report.

FLT engineers often work remotely from their employer, but safe practice should still apply. Where necessary, the engineer should use electronic join sheet completion and have access to electronic devices. Quick and simple reporting systems can be developed on these devices. If these systems are not available, then a phone call to the office or manager should be encouraged.

This topic should be included in employee 'one to one' meetings, performance reviews and team meetings. There should be regular reminders of the importance of proactive reporting. This should also be part of the consultation process.





Whatever the process, it needs to be easy!

It is important that all reports are taken seriously and investigated. The results of the investigation must be fed back to the originator to show the organisation has taken concerns seriously and acted on them, even if no major changes have taken place as a result. An explanation of the findings must be given. Failure to carry out this part of the process will make employees feel like they have wasted their time or been ignored. This has a negative effect on motivation and will stop future reports being submitted.

Induction and training

Good H&S training should be provided for all employees. New employee inductions should take place with H&S and near miss/unsafe situation reporting included.

Employee H&S training should be proportionate to the employee's role, i.e. more hazardous work will require additional training and likely specific H&S training for that role.

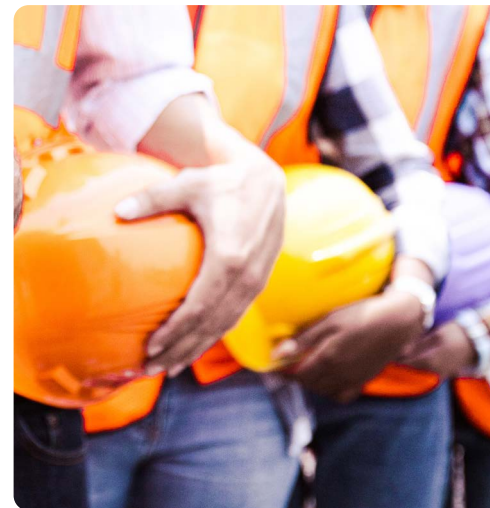
All H&S training should ensure employees can identify unsafe situations, acts and incidents within their role. If an employee does not understand they are doing something in an unsafe manner, how are they to know.

Rewards

Recognition and praise can be a powerful way to reward employees, however, some employers may decide that depending on circumstance, near miss reports warrant financial rewards to the originator. If a significant lapse has been identified by that employee, which has then helped to prevent a more serious incident, maybe a small reward is warranted. This is for each employer to decide but it should be noted failure to have adequate safeguards can result in hefty fines for a business in the event of an accident.

A small reward may be offered for every near miss/unsafe situation report raised or it could be part of the normal bonus system, again a decision for each employer.

Rewards, however, are a good motivational factor to encourage reporting.





Auditing process

Organisations should ensure they have in place an audit process for checking the H&S Management system. This will be proportionate to the organisation's size and risk profile - even the smallest of organisations should have a checking process.

This process must include near miss reporting and its effectiveness and reporting back into the H&S Management system.

This can be part of the measuring and monitoring process and should include as a minimum, the number of reports received, the percentage of employees submitting, which business areas are submitting reports, the number of reports actioned, and which have resulted in changes to working practices etc.

Conclusion

Near miss and unsafe situation reporting should be a key part of any H&S Management system. Do not overlook it. In the worst case, accidents may result in fatality. But serious injury and major property damage affecting individuals and their families is also possible. In all cases, there can be massive implications for a business.

Therefore, why overlook a process that can help reduce the likelihood of an accident happening?

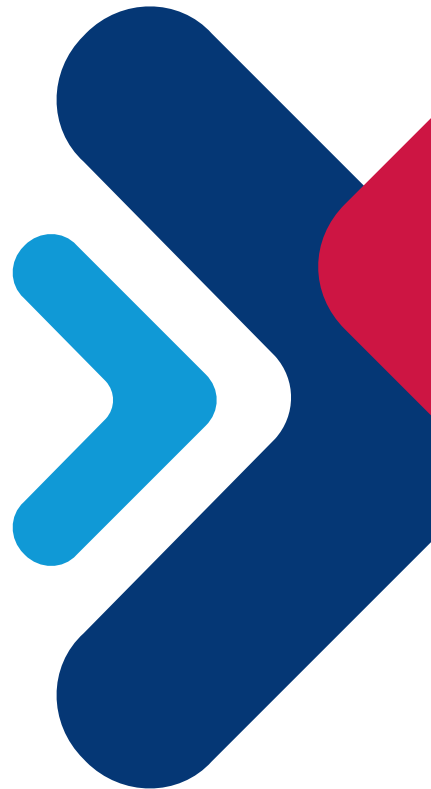
Further information

HSE HSG65 Managing for health and safety.

[Find out more](#)

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013, Schedule 2, Dangerous Occurrences.

[Find out more](#)



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