

Incident Investigation Guidelines

Incident investigation is a critical factor in any loss control effort. Without complete reporting and investigation of incidents and their associated losses, management has no true picture of the conditions that reduce the efficiency of the operation. Incident investigation will pinpoint causes of error and/or defects so that similar events can be prevented.

It is essential that incident investigation be fact-finding and not fault-finding procedures. Investigations must also go beyond the immediate incident and involve the causal factors, which contributed to the loss. The examination of the interfacing of people, equipment, material and the environment will lead to the basic causes. Because basic causes are rooted in management's lack of control, it is essential that investigations of serious incidents be a management function beginning with the first-line manager.

Ideally, all incidents, no matter how minor, should be reported. This does not mean that all incidents have to be fully investigated. But when there is a good incident reporting system, it will show trends and patterns which can be used to prevent a serious damaging event. At the direction of the Director of Risk Management, any injuries/illnesses requiring professional medical treatment or involving time away from work need to be investigated. Serious incidents involving only equipment or material losses should also be checked. An incident investigation form needs to be filled out following the event.

Incidents should be investigated as soon as possible after they occur. Information concerning activities and conditions that preceded an occurrence is important in the prevention of future episodes. This information is particularly difficult to get unless it is obtained promptly after the incident occurred. A delay may lead to erroneous or incomplete information. Prompt incident investigation also expresses concern for the safety and well being of the employees.

Following the completion of the incident investigation, the report should be sent to the Director of Risk Management who in turn will determine if a more detailed investigation is necessary. The information provided must be accurate and detailed, and the suggestions logical. Reports that are not of good quality should be returned, including comments of deficiencies and a date to be returned. The responsibility to ensure that timely corrective action is taken is that of the Director of Risk Management or appropriate designee. Follow-up to a conclusion will take place, ensuring that remedial action has been taken, reporting back to the Director of Risk Management when completed.

Summaries of vital information secured through the investigations are distributed to those who can make the information known to other supervisors and employees as appropriate. Incident investigation is a vital part of a loss control program. It is a monitoring function that occurs after the fact when the hazard control system has already broken down.