



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 18: April 28th – May 2nd, 2025

Incident Reporting

Introduction

Reporting a minor injury may seem trivial at the time. Maybe it's just a small cut or a slip on a slick floor. Doesn't seem like a big deal, right? It happens in everyday life. But what if one day someone is badly cut by that same piece of machinery that barely grazed you or someone slipped and injured themselves in that exact same spot you slipped yesterday. Or to give another scenario, what if you sustain a minor cut but keep working through and don't properly clean the wound and it becomes infected. It may seem unlikely, but these preventable injuries happen every day. This week we will discuss taking the extra steps to protect yourself and your co-workers by reporting workplace safety incidents.

Monday – Types of safety incidents

There are many terms used to describe different types of safety incidents. Although businesses may use different terminology, today we will define some of the basic terms and provide some clarification.

- **Safety opportunities:** this type of incident is an opportunity for continuous improvement to make your workplace safer. It is not an immediate threat but if not addressed, it creates a situation that could become a hazard. For example, a blocked safety exit or an unsafe behavior such as not wearing the proper PPE.
- **Near Miss:** this is a situation where an incident, major or minor, is narrowly avoided. This situation did not cause an injury, but it had the potential to do so. For example, a slip in a oily area or a trip over material stored in the incorrect location.
- **First Aid:** this is a safety incident that did result in a minor injury such as shallow laceration or minor bruising. Usually, these injuries require immediate but minor medical treatment that is provided at the facility.
- **Medical Treatment Case:** These incidents are often referred to as "recordables" because OSHA requires they be reported in the annual OSHA 300 log. These incidents result in injuries that require minor to extensive medical treatment by a medical professional.

Tuesday – When should you report a safety incident?

Timeliness of reporting could be the difference between a safety incident resulting in no injury, a minor injury or a life changing accident. You may have noticed yesterday we defined the safety incidents from least severe to most severe. Reporting an incident at the lowest level, in this case a safety opportunity could ensure you and your co-workers get through the workday safely. The alternative is a safety opportunity escalating to a near miss, first aid and finally a medical treatment case.

Wednesday- What should happen after you report an incident?

It may be difficult to take reporting seriously if you don't understand what steps should happen next. In order to have an effective safety culture, there should be a clearly defined protocol for reacting to a safety incident report. Today we will discuss some best practices to incorporate in your workplace.

1. Safety incident is reported. Best practice is to report immediately but within 24hrs depending on the severity of the hazard. Any injury should be reported immediately.
2. Provide medical treatment as necessary if an injury occurred.
3. Stop the at-risk operation.
4. Conduct an incident investigation.
5. Implement corrective actions and communication to the team members.
6. Follow up with return protocol for injured employee. Provide care management as necessary.



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Thursday – Proactive vs. Reactive

Now that we understand the different categories of safety incidents and we've discussed best practices for reacting to a safety incident, let's take a look at a strategy for developing a proactive approach vs. reactive.

- Utilize what is called leading indicators to develop corrective actions to proactively prevent future or more severe injuries.
- Leading indicators are a cumulation of minor incidents such as repeat safety opportunities or near misses that foreshadow more severe potential injuries.
- For example, if the safety incidents reported have the same theme, such as slips or trips, these leading indicators tell you that eventually you can expect a serious fall to occur and that is where your attention should be focused. Perhaps the 5S in your area needs to be addressed to proactively prevent further incidents.
- Addressing issues that the lowest level is a receipt for success in creating a safe work environment.

Friday – Open Discussion

This week we have discussed the different types of safety incidents, when to report, how to react to a report and how to create a proactive safety culture. Now let's open it up for discussion with the group.

- Have you reported a safety opportunity in your area?
- What did you do to address the issue?
- Are you comfortable reporting an incident? Is there any reason you would not want to report?
- Have you ever witnessed an injury that could have been prevented if action was taken sooner to address the problem?