



6 Steps to a Basic Accident Investigation

Accident investigations are an opportunity to uncover safety problems and correct them. But you have to take the right steps to get the right result. The following steps are a guide to performing a basic accident investigation.

Step 1: Gather information - Get a brief overview of the situation from witnesses and employees directly involved in the incident. You just need enough information to understand the basics of what happened.

Step 2: Search for and establish facts - Examine the accident scene, looking for things that will help you understand what happened. This includes looking for dents, cracks, scrapes, splits, etc. in equipment; tire tracks, footprints, etc.; spills or leaks; scattered or broken parts; and so on. Also take photographs!

Step 3: Establish essential contributing factors - Contributing factors include environmental factors, design, systems and procedures, and human behavior. Design factors include workplace layout, design of tools and equipment, and maintenance. Systems and procedures factors include lack of systems and procedures, inappropriate systems and procedures, training in procedures, and housekeeping. Human behavior is common in accidents and includes carelessness, rushing, fatigue, and so on.

Step 4: Find root causes - There are almost always multiple causes that contribute to an accident. Try not to settle on a single cause theory. Try to identify all of the underlying causes as well as the primary cause. For example, in the case of a fall, in addition to obvious causes, such as a trip hazard, also consider possible causes such as inadequate lighting, injured worker was carrying a large object that blocked his or her forward vision, or the trip hazard was left by another employee who did not pick up after his task was complete.

Step 5: Determine corrective actions - Determine corrective actions. Once you know what happened and why it happened, you are ready to determine how to fix the problem so that you avoid repeat accidents. Think about not only what is the most expedient action but also about which actions will permanently solve the problems that led to the accident.

Step 6: Implement corrective actions – Make sure that the implemented corrective actions were sufficient enough to mitigate the hazard and/or address the issues.

What happens to this information after I submit the report?

Accident reports are reviewed by your district's employee safety committee. It is a regulatory requirement that the accident reports are inclusive of an accident investigation to ensure that the hazard was addressed to close the loop on the report. If the supervisor's investigation section is left blank or a detailed investigation was not completed, then the report must be sent back to the supervisor for completion.