



TOOLBOX
INFORMATION
SESSION

**REPORTING
OF
INCIDENTS**

INTRODUCTION

Incidents happen all the time. They can range from minor incidents, like cuts and bruises, to major incidents, sometimes resulting in death.

The reason for this safety talk is to explain why it is important to report all your incidents and what the company does with the information you give them.

Incidents will continue to occur if they are not reported. By reporting them when they first happen you will be:

- making sure everyone is aware of possible hazards;
- reducing the chance that it will occur again;
- meeting your legal obligations; and
- instigating an investigation to find out why it happened.

By reporting and investigating accidents and incidents you help to make your work place safer for yourself and your work mates.

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

People often think that accidents and incidents are the same thing. It is important to understand the difference between the two as you are required, by law, to report both events.

Both accidents and incidents are unplanned and undesirable events, but there are definite differences between them that you have to know about so you can report them.

An accident can be defined as something that results in:

- any personal injury whether it's minor or major;
- any loss of productivity;
- any environmental damage; and
- any damage to property.

Now that we know the meaning of the word accident, we'll look at the term incident.

An incident can be defined as an event that has the **potential** to cause:

- any personal injury whether it's minor or major;
- any loss of productivity;
- any environmental damage; and
- any damage to property.

Incidents are also known as near misses or near hits.

REPORTING OF ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

When an accident or incident occurs you must report it immediately to your supervisor. Do not move or touch anything, as it could provide clues to the cause of the accident.

It may seem like a lot of paperwork to some of you, but reporting accidents and incidents is not only a legal obligation, it is a practice that could save you and your work mates from injuries in the future.

When you report your accident or incident:

- it makes everyone aware that there is a problem. This lessens the likelihood of the same thing happening again;
- it allows your employer to conduct an investigation to identify the cause;
- it may allow your employer to take action to immediately fix the problem;
- if the cause is more permanent, it gives your employer the opportunity to make your work place safer by improving your work practices;
- you are meeting your obligation and duty according to statutory law; and
- you could be saving someone's life by reporting it.

PROMPT REPORTING

Sometimes employees do not always report accidents and incidents immediately, particularly minor ones.

This means the company often finds out about them well after the event.

This is often too late to conduct an effective investigation and during that time the accident or incident has the potential to occur again.

Some of the reasons employees are reluctant to report accidents or incidents are:

- fear of getting blamed;
- fear of their name being reported;
- peer pressure not to report;
- fear of the supervisor's negative reaction;
- not wanting to lose time on the job; and
- failure to understand the significance of the incident.

You have an obligation and duty to report all accidents and incidents.

Failure to do so may result in someone being hurt, because timely corrective action could not be taken to prevent it.

IDENTIFYING CAUSES

After an investigation has been completed, the immediate cause for the accident or incident should be known.

The immediate causes can be categorised in two ways. These are unsafe acts, which are the actions taken by people, and unsafe conditions, which identify a problem in the work environment.

One or both of these can cause an accident or incident.

The main causes of accidents and incidents due to unsafe conditions are:

- poor housekeeping;
- defective equipment;
- inadequate guarding;
- insufficient ventilation; and
- inadequate lighting for the job.

The main causes of accidents and incidents due to unsafe workplace practises are:

- incorrect use of tools;
- use of defective equipment;
- failure to wear protective equipment provided;

- not following procedures or rules; and
- not following directions given by the supervisor.

PREVENTION BY REPORTING

By reporting and investigating accidents, the company is able to find out why the accident or incident occurred, and then the appropriate action can be taken to stop it from happening again.

Some ways to prevent future accidents and incidents are:

- to report any accident or incident immediately;
- to conduct a thorough investigation in order to identify the causes;
- to take corrective action to reduce the possibility of a reoccurrence;
- to make the employer aware of any high risk tasks and areas;
- to enforce safe work procedures;
- to tell the workforce about the hazard; and
- to follow up on the investigation and make sure the correct action has been taken to fix the problem.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Legislation from most states of Australia requires all accidents and incidents to be reported.

For example, in Western Australia, The Mines Safety and Inspection Act requires all accidents to be reported on a monthly basis to the Department of Minerals and Energy. Also any **serious** injuries have to be reported **immediately** to the District Inspector.

For your employer to be able to meet its legal responsibility, you have to meet your legal obligation by reporting any accidents or incidents immediately after they happen.

A serious injury is:

- when a person is injured and can't continue working for two weeks or more;
- when the injury involves unconsciousness caused by inhaling fumes, poisonous gases or asphyxiation;
- if the injury results from an accident, including inhaling fumes, while using explosives;
- a fracture of the skull, spine, pelvis, arm or leg;
- any amputation; and
- loss of sight.

Your legal obligations are:

- to report the accident or incident immediately;
- to report all facts as well as you can;
- to tell the truth - accident reports are admissible as evidence in court; and
- to make your statement.

SUMMARY

It is your responsibility, by law, to report all accidents and incidents immediately to your supervisor.

Accidents and incidents will continue to occur if they are not reported. By reporting them you are:

- making everyone aware of a hazard;
- instigating an investigation to find the cause;
- reducing the chance that it will happen again;
- meeting your legal obligation; and
- making your work place safer.