

THE MCINTYRE GROUP
INSURANCE BROKERS & CONSULTANTS

For Your Safety

Analyze Close Calls to Prevent Future Accidents

Many people are familiar with close calls. At some point in life, almost everyone experiences one. It may be while driving, working or simply sitting still. If close calls happen at work, they may be easy to shrug off, and they are quickly forgotten. However, brushing off such important incidents can be very dangerous. Close calls can be helpful warning signs for dangers that need immediate attention. In the workplace, they often happen because something is wrong. Whether the potential danger is injury, death or damage to an object, the close call should be reported immediately. Employers should encourage their workers to report all accidents and close calls.

There are usually several contributing factors for every workplace accident. However, most of these factors are controllable. One of the best ways to prevent a repeat episode is to look carefully at close calls. Employers have a responsibility to analyze the situation and find solutions. If the situation is not evaluated, it is difficult to take steps to eliminate hazardous conditions.

In some cases, there may be multiple reasons for an accident or close call. Poor lighting, high noise levels, unguarded machinery, management allowing shortcuts or workers not understanding procedures are all common contributing factors. It is important for employers not to rush into judgment when an incident happens. First, collect and examine all of the facts. Find out what is

missing by looking for underlying or immediate causes. An immediate cause may be a mechanical failure or some other unsafe condition. It could also be an unsafe action taken by an employee. Underlying causes may be missing guards, poor maintenance, inadequate training, crowded work spaces or a wide array of similar problems.

Employers should encourage workers to report all incidents to supervisors. This will ensure that injury and accident reports can be properly completed. After an investigation has been completed, employers should try to find solutions to prevent future occurrences. It may be necessary to implement new administrative controls, engineering controls, increased communication plans or additional training programs. Employees should inspect their work spaces every day to check for unsafe actions or conditions. They should also know exactly who to report such conditions to. Awareness is the key to preventing accidents before they happen and eliminating workplace hazards. Some hazards may still exist. However, workers should know how to safely avoid them. For example, a machine with a stored electrical charge will always be a hazard. If employees know how to safely use it and follow lockout/tagout procedures, the hazard is greatly reduced. Close calls are easy to wave off, but the next accident could kill someone. Be sure to communicate to employees that even the smallest close call or accident must be reported immediately.



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