

Section 30: ACCIDENT STATISTICS, INVESTIGATION AND REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Despite accident prevention efforts, accidents and injuries may still occur. Investigation and analysis of accidents can provide insight for preventing future accidents.

APPLICABILITY

Supervisors, Managers, and Directors all have a role in accident investigation and review. It is important for management to be aware of the accidents that occur and the recommendations for prevention of future accidents.

Safety and Claims Management assists department management by providing accident statistics and analysis, by responding to serious accidents, and by making recommendations for accident prevention.

ACCIDENT STATISTICS

The regular compilation of accident statistics aids in measuring the effectiveness of King County's accident prevention programs and helps to efficiently direct resources to identified problem areas. A record of King County's occupational injuries and illnesses (OSHA 300 log) is maintained by Safety and Claims Management. A summary of this record is to be posted from February 1st until April 30th of each year at principle County work locations. Safety and Claims Management sends the OSHA 300 summary to specified locations. If your group does not receive the summary and would like one, call 206-477-3350.

In addition, Safety and Health Professionals conduct an annual analysis of each department's illness and injury experience, and develop recommendations for illness and injury reduction.

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Conducting accident investigations is a primary responsibility of all supervisors. Conducting a thorough, effective investigation will prevent similar accidents from occurring, and will save time and expense. Training is available to assist supervisors and management leadership teams in developing accident investigation skills. See Section 4 – "Employee Safety Training."

Any incident that results in a loss of any kind (injury, illness, or property damage) should be immediately and properly investigated. Many parties are interested in the evaluation of accidents, including legal departments, insurance companies, employees, management, government agencies and even the media. A

thorough investigation provides answers to questions from any source.

Supervisor actions after an injury or accident are critical. There are four distinct phases or responses to guide a supervisor during the investigation:

- Response
- Fact Finding
- Analysis
- Recommendations

RESPONSE - Employees need to know how to report accidents and injuries, and need to feel free from repercussions for reporting. Supervisors can only investigate incidents they know about, and the investigation must begin immediately.

The first two actions at the scene of an accident are to provide first aid for any victims and to eliminate hazards. The next step is securing the area. Equipment and evidence must be preserved so it can be examined, sketched, or photographed. Finally, interview witnesses at the site to gather information while it is fresh in their minds.

If the accident results in a fatality or the hospitalization of one or more employees, the Department of Labor and Industries must be notified within 8 hours of the incident. The OSHA reporting hotline number is 1-800-423-7233. A citation may be issued to the county if the reporting time exceeds 8 hours.

FACT FINDING – The focus is to identify facts, critical information, root causes and systemic problems, not just immediately visible symptoms. Conduct on-site interviews, and gather equipment and materials involved for possible testing and reenactment. Inspect the site and document observations. Take photographs for documentation.

ANALYSIS – Review testing results, interviews and physical evidence. Outline the sequence of events leading up to the accident, and determine the cause(s) of the accident. Assigning blame should be avoided, although human error may be a contributor to the accident. Often more than one cause is at the root of the accident. Basic causes of accidents include:

- 1) People/Procedures
- 2) Equipment/Tools
- 3) Materials
- 4) Environment

RECOMMENDATIONS – Once the true causes have been identified, recommendations can be made for the elimination of the hazard. Possible solutions may involve

- 1) Personnel actions (training, accountability measures, work practices, management involvement);
- 2) Equipment purchases, modifications, or maintenance programs;
- 3) Material changes or storage and handling methods updated; or
- 4) Changes to the work environment that could include lighting, signs/placards, safety devices, or procedural improvements.

Recommendations should be specific, written, and effectively communicated. The recommendations must address the root causes of the accident/injury to prevent future injuries. Once completed, the investigation and recommendations should go through a departmental review process. Steps can then be taken towards implementing the recommendations.

ACCIDENT REVIEWS

Accident review is a required function of each department's Safety Committee. In addition, departments are encouraged to develop a departmental Accident Review Board to provide a central forum for investigating serious and high-cost accidents, determining causation, and recommending corrective actions.

Large departments may have a two-tiered format, individual divisional Accident Review Boards and a Departmental Accident Review Board which reviews only accidents involving serious injury or high cost damage to property.

Accident Review Boards should meet monthly, or as required in response to serious accidents. Information reviewed should include the "Work Related Illness/Injury Supervisor Report" and/or "Property or Equipment Damage Report." Both the supervisor and the involved employees shall be present and may present additional information to the Board. Accidents may be evaluated as to their preventability by employee actions.

Appropriate representation from Safety and Claims Management is required for review of accidents involving fatalities, serious injuries, or major losses. Safety and Claims Management must be notified (206-477-3350) of the Accident Review Board meetings where this type of accident will be reviewed.

Since the primary objective of the Accident Review Board is to prevent a recurrence of similar accidents, the Board should determine contributing causes. When an accident is found to involve a deficiency in department operating standards, appropriate steps should be taken to correct the deficiency within a specified period of time. Corrective actions may be recommended for employee behavior as well, especially if safety rules were violated.

Attachment 1 is a sample form to be used for accident review.

Attachment 1:

KING COUNTY ACCIDENT REVIEW

DEPARTMENT _____ DIVISION _____

NAME _____

OCCUPATION _____

DATE OF ACCIDENT _____ DATE OF REVIEW _____

REVIEW BOARD'S CONCLUSIONS: _____

PREVENTABLE _____

NOT PREVENTABLE _____

RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

BOARD MEMBERS: _____

SUPERVISOR: DO YOU CONCUR WITH THE BOARD'S FINDINGS? _____

REFERRED? _____ (yes or no) DATE _____

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE _____

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