



Helpful Hints for Supervisors on Accident Investigations

During accident investigations, Safety professionals often discover that supervisors are unsure of their responsibilities. Many times attitude, confusion, and lack of experience complicate the process. Knowing what to expect do a great deal toward helping the injured employee and getting things back to normal.

Keep the following things in mind in case of an accident:

- Supervisors have a responsibility to investigate an accident. They can learn from the past by investigating any accident, even if it did not result in injury. Accidents involving only property damage should be investigated as vigorously as those involving personnel injury. Sooner or later that same accident scenario may result in a personal injury accident.
- A quick and thorough accident investigation by the supervisor demonstrates to employees that the supervisor is concerned about safety. Otherwise, when an employee experiences an accident and the supervisor expresses more concern over the extra paper work than for the employee's condition, the employee is justified in believing the supervisor just doesn't care about her/his safety.
- Preventing future injuries should always be the focus of an investigation, not fixing blame. A thorough investigation helps identify the causes of an accident and gives insight into what can be done to prevent it in the future.
- Keep an open mind during the investigation. Although it may seem the cause of an accident is obvious before beginning an investigation, there may be additional factors that are not immediately clear. All accidents have a cause – they don't just happen. If the cause can be corrected, the risk of future injury is greatly reduced.
- Schedule interviews as soon as possible after an incident with those directly involved and with any one else who might be useful. The interviews should be conducted privately and individually so that the comments of one will not influence the responses of others. Here are some interviewing tips:
 - Put the employee at ease through words and body language. Remind the employee that the goal of the investigation is to prevent future injuries and develop countermeasures, not to place blame.
 - Conduct the investigation at the scene of the injury as soon after the accident as safely possible.
 - Ask the employee to state in his/her own words exactly what happened. Avoid interrupting or asking for more details at this time.
 - Repeat the employee's version of the event back and allow him/her to make any corrections or additions.

- After the employee has given the description of the event, ask appropriate questions that focus on causes. Avoid using words or body language that suggest fault or blame.
- When the interview is finished, remind the employee the investigation was to determine the cause and corrective action that can eliminate an accident in the future.

