

Workers' Comp Accident Investigation For *Prevention*

How to Investigate Accidents

Accident investigations are intended to identify accident root-causes and to determine any action necessary to prevent recurrence. Effective action is dependent on a thorough investigation. Management as well as employee action/inaction should be considered. The following investigation procedures are recommended:

1. Approach the investigation with an attitude of determining the facts, not blame
2. Be objective. The apparent cause may not be the actual cause
3. Investigate immediately. Elapsed time may alter the conditions and people's memories
4. Go to the scene and inspect all physical evidence
5. Talk to all involved persons and witnesses. Interview each person separately so you hear each version of the events, not a group re-enactment of the accident
6. Don't make assumptions of the cause(s) until you have gathered all the facts

Multiple Causes of Accidents

There are several theories on what causes or leads to accidents and each theory has its own merit. However, if you look deeper into accident cause(s), you'll see that most accidents are a result of a series of factors that all lined up and resulted in the unfortunate circumstance, an accident. This theory is commonly referred to as the "Domino Theory". Utilizing this theory, if you remove or place a barrier between dominos you have in effect broken the chain of events which leads to the injury/accident. The primary dominos are:

1. **Lack of Controls Control** (e.g. training, planned inspections, safety rules and procedures)
2. **Personal Factors** (e.g. lack of knowledge, lack of skill, improper motivation)
3. **Substandard Acts or Practices** (e.g. operating without authority, failure to secure)

These Questions Help Determine Why Management or Employee Failure Occurred:

1. Was the proper procedure being used? Were there any extenuating circumstances?
2. What is the employee's attitude to the job? Does the employee normally follow proper procedures and good safety practices?
3. Is the employee new to the company or new to the job?
4. What on-the-job training did the employee receive?
5. Was the employee informed of all the hazards associated with the job?
6. Are there department safety rules that are applicable to the employee's job? Does the employee know what they are?

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