



ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

1. PURPOSE

The principal purpose of accident investigation is to obtain information that will be of help in preventing future accidents. Nearly every investigation offers the possibility of preventing future accidents. For this reason it is advantageous to examine each accident, to establish the cause and to correct the situation as soon as possible. Accident investigations are not intended to assign blame or fix fault, but to prevent the reoccurrence of injuries and property damage.

Most accidents, unsafe acts, and conditions that lead to accidents are only symptoms of underlying causes. Identifying the basic cause (the unsafe act and/or unsafe condition) is only the starting point in learning why the accident/incident occurred. Identifying the primary causes of an accident will assist in determining the underlying cause, which enables effective changes and corrections. Proper action reduces the possibility of recurrence.

2. WHAT ACCIDENTS SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED

It is important to investigate all accidents/incidents regardless of whether or not they resulted in significant injury and/or property damage.

3. WHO SHOULD INVESTIGATE

3.1. Employee Injury/County Property Damage

Ideally the immediate supervisor and/or manager should be responsible for conducting the accident investigation.

3.2. Third Party Liability

All incidents involving bodily injury or property damage to individuals other than Okaloosa County employees must be reported by telephone to the Risk Management Department prior to being investigated. The Risk Management Department will provide instructions on how to proceed.

4. **WHEN SHOULD THE INVESTIGATION BE MADE**

Accident investigations should begin the moment it is known that an accident has occurred. The passage of time tends to erase and color the facts surrounding an accident and key witnesses may leave the scene. A delay of only a few hours may permit evidence to be removed, destroyed or forgotten.

5. **HOW TO CONDUCT THE INVESTIGATION**

How we approach people in during the investigation will often determine the amount of information we receive and its success or failure. Giving the impression of fault finding or trying to fix blame will accomplish very little toward obtaining the information that a thorough investigation requires. Although many types of accident investigation report forms are available, it is important that the form used does not limit the investigation but that the required facts (the accident, basic and primary cause(s) and the necessary corrective action) are covered.

One of the most important and over-used words in the fact finding process of accident investigation is the word "Why?" Thoroughly determining the answer to "why" an unsafe act and/or "why" an unsafe condition occurred, and "why" it existed will assist in your accident analysis and help to pinpoint the issues requiring corrective action.

6. **CORRECTIVE ACTIONS**

The benefits of accident investigations are numerous. Primary is the development of actions to correct the unsafe act or condition that will prevent future loss. Completed accident investigation reports should be routed to a person in the organization who has the authority and responsibility to see that the necessary changes are made.

7. **INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES**

Accident investigations should be conducted systematically to identify underlying and contributory causes and to determine an effective course of corrective action. When and where possible secure or control the accident scene to reduce any potential for further injury or damage and to maintain conditions as they existed at the time of the accident.

7.1. What form do I use - Who do I send it to?

- 7.1.1. Supervisor's Accident/Incident Investigation Forms supplied by the Risk Management Department.
- 7.1.2. Completed forms along with any additional information (photos, etc.) should be sent to department manager for review, evaluation and forwarding to Risk Management Department.

7.2. Who do I talk to - What do I ask?

- 7.2.1. The injured employee or those directly involved in the accident/incident.
- 7.2.2. Eye witnesses to the accident.
- 7.2.3. Co-workers, if they can provide meaningful information or insight.
- 7.2.4. Ask why! Record factual information - if opinions are provided they should be indicated as such.

7.3. How do I analyze and find the underlying cause(s)?

- 7.3.1. An evaluation of all the information should be made and compared with your personal knowledge and insight as a supervisor of the operations/personnel involved.
- 7.3.2. Look beyond the immediate or direct cause to determine why or what lead to the unsafe act or condition and learn to address these types of issues with a prevention attitude.

7.4. What are the benefits?

- 7.4.1. Obviously the prevention of future accidents and their related cost is the primary benefit of effective accident investigations.
- 7.4.2. An awareness or attitude of safety will also be established as part of daily operations allowing work to be accomplished without the disruption that results when accidents and/or injuries occur.