



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

Weekly Safety Meeting

Report Near Misses

A worker received an electric shock on a piece of equipment he was using. He was not injured, and he did not report the incident. A few days later another worker also received a shock from the same defective equipment and again did not report the problem. Within days a third worker also received an electrical shock, which killed him.

This true story illustrates what can happen when we ignore close calls in the workplace. A close call is a chance to identify a hazard and correct it before someone is seriously injured or killed.

Defining "Near Misses"

'Near misses' can be defined as minor accidents or close calls that have the potential for property loss or injury. A near miss will prevent a task from being completed as planned. Most accidents can be predicted by close calls. These are accidents that almost happened or possibly did happen but simply didn't result in an injury this time around.

Here are some examples of near misses in the workplace:

- An employee trips over an extension cord that lies across the floor but avoids a fall by grabbing the corner of a desk.
- An outward-opening door nearly hits a worker who jumps back just in time to avoid a mishap.
- Instead of using a ladder, an employee puts a box on top of a drum, loses balance and stumbles to the ground. Although the employee is shaken, there is no injury.

When incidents like these happen, most workers are simply relieved they were not injured and then forget about what happened moments later. However, when employees narrowly avoid an accident or injury, every worker should assume that he or she is at risk for that same injury. Another person, possibly even the employee with the close call, is very likely to be injured by that very same hazard on a future date. In fact, the difference between a near miss and a serious injury is often a fraction of an inch or a split second of time.

We have all had many experiences with close calls or near misses in our everyday lives. The best thing we can do is to pay attention to them and learn from them.

For example, most of us have slipped while rushing down a stairway. We may have caught ourselves before falling and then resolve to slow down in the future. Another example is pulling out to pass when driving and being faced with an on-coming car. We quickly pull back into our own lane, and tell ourselves next time we will make sure it is safe before we try to pass.

In both instances, there was the potential for a serious accident but we were lucky. We have learned something from the close call and will probably be more aware in the future.

Near Misses:

In today's workplace, companies cannot afford to ignore near misses.

- Most accidents can be predicted by near misses.
- Studies shows that for every injury or accident at a workplace, there are usually about 189 near misses.
- The difference between a near miss and a serious injury might be a fraction of an inch or a split second of time.
- Near misses are a red flag--a warning that something is very wrong and requires immediate attention.

Reporting Near Misses:

- You're not looking to blame anyone when you ask them to report near misses; you just want to get to the root of the problem so that you can prevent future accidents and injuries.
- You want them to report a near miss even if they've removed the hazard or corrected the problem themselves.
 - Many near misses are just the tip of the iceberg--signs of larger safety problems that need attention, such as poor housekeeping, the need for an ongoing maintenance plan, poor work area layout, problematic work procedures, or insufficient training in safe work practices. You need to know about every little safety-related problem.

Sometimes there are multiple causes for a near miss, involving equipment (unguarded machinery), environment (poor lighting or noise level), people (procedures not understood or not followed) or management (allowed shortcuts). Don't rush to judge. Examine the facts and find what's missing. Look for immediate and underlying causes. An immediate cause may be an unsafe condition like a mechanical failure, or it could be an unsafe action by an employee. The underlying cause could be poor machine maintenance, a missing guard, a crowded work area, or a lack of training.

Workers should daily inspect the work area for unsafe conditions or unsafe actions and, if found, report them to the supervisor. Hazard awareness is key to preventing accidents before they happen. Take steps to eliminate hazards as soon as they are discovered. Learn the real lesson from near misses. They can happen again and again until they cause injury, so tell your supervisor about every accident, no matter how minor it may seem at the time. You never know when an incident may be repeated and result in an injury or even death.

Remember:

The few minutes spent reporting and investigating near-miss incidents can help prevent similar incidents, and even severe injuries. The difference between a near miss and an injury is typically a fraction of an inch or a split second.

A NEAR MISS SHOULD BECOME A LESSON LEARNED!!

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
Location:	Date:
Conducted By:	Trainer Signature:

Name (print clearly)	Signature	Comments / Safety Concerns / Training Requests

