



Close Calls and Near Misses

Near misses are incidents that **do not** involve injury or property damage but have the **potential** for injury or property damage. Sometimes referred to as “close calls,” these incidents are indications that something is not right in the workplace.

It is extremely important that all near misses be reported and corrective action taken. “Why? After all, nobody was hurt and there was no damage.” **The reason is simple – because you now have a “wake-up call” to take corrective action and make your workplace safer to prevent a future accident.**

Interestingly, employees who report having experienced a near miss are almost **twice** as likely to experience an accident as those who have not experienced a near miss.

You should consider yourself ‘lucky’ when a near miss occurs – ‘lucky’ only from the standpoint that nobody was injured. If the near miss goes unreported, next time you may not be so ‘lucky.’ Many times, as unfortunate as it may seem, we learn from our mistakes. Usually, it isn’t until somebody gets hurt that we correct the situation.

What if you don’t report a near miss and the problem is not fixed? Someone may get hurt! Imagine the guilt you would feel if an injury or fatality took place because the victim was unaware of a hazard that you knew of but did not report.

When investigating a near miss, look for possible causes including:

- Poor equipment condition or maintenance;
- Not wearing personal protective equipment;
- Inadequate or missing machine guarding;
- Slip, trip or fall due to poor housekeeping;
- Lack of, or poor, training and supervision; and
- Lack of procedure enforcement.

A supervisor’s responsibility is to ensure that the workplace is safe, but each employee must contribute to the process through awareness, reporting, and group efforts toward prevention. You must also hold patients, visitors, and contractors to the same safety standards you follow.

When investigating a near miss, it’s a good idea to assume that employees were not negligent and to not place blame. Blame discourages future reporting and prevention opportunities.

Safety has nothing to do with luck. Take the time to fix or report potential problems before they become accidents.

This information is a service of the OHSU Safety Committee (503 494-7795).
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