



WORKPLACE SAFETY: Analyzing Incidents

We investigate causes of events all the time, from the routine to the extraordinary. You may need to look at how a filing system became disorganized or your team may be examining why drivers routinely pass a particular stop sign without stopping. An investigation is best served by examining the full context with “Systems Thinking” and by tracing the cause back to it’s roots with “Root Cause Analysis”. Reports submitted to Risk Management through the WSIRS are approached with these concepts in mind. This understanding will help in submitting an incident report through WSIRS. Here is a brief overview.

Systems Thinking

“Systems thinking” is based on the belief that component parts of a system can best be understood in the context of relationships with each other and with other systems, rather than in isolation. The only way to fully understand why a problem or element occurs and persists is to understand the part in relation to the whole.

Rather than attributing a given incident to one individual’s behavior or a fluke, consider all factors contributing to the incident.

See Page 3 for examples of incidents at OHSU where Systems Thinking was applied in the reporting process, and examples where it was not.



Digging for Better Solutions

Root Cause Analysis can be described by using the metaphor of a tree. The accident or unsafe incident happens at the leaf, but in order to look deeper at an incident, we examine the branch which connects to a larger branch which connects to an upper trunk which ties into the main trunk. We can go further, to the root ball, then tap root, etc.



Asking “five why’s” helps the puzzle fall into place in the following example:

1. Why did little Sally Who stub her toe? ***A box was there.***
2. Why was the box on the floor? ***There was no other place to put it for now.***
3. Why is there no holding area for boxes? ***There’s no extra space in the lab.***
4. Why is space limited in the lab? ***These old left over chemicals take up so much space.***
5. Why are the excess chemicals using so much space? ***We forgot the Haz Mat Tech’s number.***

(FYI, the Haz Mat Tech’s number is 4-0425.)

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Topic of the Month:

SAFETY TRAINING FOR NEW EMPLOYEES

Accident statistics prove that the most likely employees to get injured are "new employees," including those newly hired, temporary employees, employees transferred to new work areas, contract employees, and recently promoted employees.

Why?

- New hires are usually unfamiliar with the specific work area.
- Sometimes "unseasoned" employees are assigned to train new employees. This can lead to gaps in training.
- New employees trying to prove themselves may take unnecessary risks.



Getting Off to a Good Start

Clear and specific safety expectations:

Standard safety training at OHSU includes General Safety, Laboratory Safety and Environment of Care modules on Big Brain. Individual departments often have unique safety issues which are best addressed in department training. This training would identify objectives and expectations that help guide performance and safety culture in a specific area.



Experienced employees make excellent mentors: Such one-on-one training conveys safety practices, procedures, and culture in a positive and correct manner while building a valuable resource relationship.

Training and performance reviews: Even when a new

employee's training is complete and the training is incorporated, performance reviews and refreshers are valuable for instituting safe practices.

The value of communication: When employees have limited contact with fellow coworkers, cultivating a culture of safety can be challenging. Keeping the lines of communication open for questions, concerns, and information exchanges is important.



Participation in safety activities: Seeing "safety in action" has positive results. Knowing that there are checks and balances and that OHSU cares about workplace safety reinforces good practices.

No such thing as common sense: Repeatedly, the cause of accidents is an expectation that we all agree on what "common sense" is. Rather than assumptions regarding safe practices, good systems and well trained people prevent accidents. Leaving worker safety to "common sense" leads to accidents.

Lead by example. What others do in the everyday work routine may be the best training picture a new employee sees.

Supervisors and staff should be sure to understand the following issues:

- Proper safety practices to use and hazards within the department.
- What to do if there is an accident or injury.
- How to respond to emergencies.
- How to care for and use personal protective equipment (e.g.: gloves, eye protection).
- How to use tools, machinery, or work safely during hazardous processes.
- Housekeeping and personal cleanup rules.
- The location of emergency equipment and first-aid supplies.

Supervisors' participation in safe practices and safety programs helps keep morale high and reduce accidents!

SAFETYTEAM MEMBERSHIP

SafetyTeam Members spend approximately 15 minutes per month to help ensure a safe workplace at OHSU. Members receive monthly email with a link to this newsletter and a few brief questions to answer.

Members then channel safety concerns from locations and departments all over OHSU to the SafetyTeam Coordinator, who then helps connect members with resources and when necessary, brings concerns to the OHSU Safety Committee.



To join, contact safeteam@ohsu.com or 4-7795.

Systems Thinking in Action

Even at safety and health-conscious OHSU, incidents do occur from time to time. The following are some excellent examples of either the lack of Systems Thinking or the presence of it. You'll see here which example shows a more sound approach.

- **Surgery:** An employee cuts his/her hand while holding and dissecting tissue using over a sink. The employee's hand slips and the finger is cut through the glove. The employee washes the area and reports the incident. This employee's supervisor has assessed the situation and has made arrangements to set up suitable dissection station. This will also expert staff to oversee these kinds of procedures.



- **Office Setting:** An employee hurts his/her neck, back and leg while falling. The employee fell from a chair that has wheels while reaching for an object in a high storage area. The supervisor assesses the situation and instructs the employee not to stand on a chair with wheels again.



(cont'd)

Is it clear to see which solution will have a lasting effect on employee safety? In the second example, the supervisor stops at the first "Why" and an opportunity is missed to prevent repeated injury. If one person is told to no longer use a chair with wheels to reach high places, does this prevent other people from doing the same thing? Perhaps the addition of a nearby step stool or the lowering of storage locations might be more effective.

In the first example, not only is the repetition of the incident unlikely. Putting the right tools in the right place at the right time is enhanced by increased oversight. This adjustment heads off future incidents and promotes a culture of safe practices.



Please Note:

Some areas of Marquam Hill experience fuel odors due to helipad activity from time to time. Keep in mind that building ventilation systems filter out these odors in roughly 15 minutes. This is common for all area hospitals. If after 15 to 20 minutes, the odor does not clear, contact Public Safety at 4-7755.



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<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/integrity/ehrs/safety/gen/safetynews.cfm>

The SAFETYTEAM page is available at:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/integrity/ehrs/safety/gen/safeteam.cfm>

These pages are updated regularly. Send suggestions to the SafetyTeam Coordinator at:

safeteam@ohsu.edu

Questions? Contact
Environmental Health &
Radiation Safety:
503-494-7795

