



10 Steps to Investigating Accidents

Effective accident investigation requires tact, attention to detail, research, preparation and good communication skills. Employers should consider these qualities when choosing and training who will investigate accidents at each worksite.

The following is a guide for conducting an accident investigation:

1. **GO** to the accident scene at once, or at least no later than 24 hours to begin the investigation. The first concern after an accident has occurred is to administer appropriate medical attention to any injured employees.
2. **SECURE** the accident scene to ensure the safety of others and to protect the "evidence." This should include securing damaged or involved equipment for further inspection. Take photographs and relevant measures at the scene.
3. **TALK** with the injured person, supervisors, coworkers and any other witnesses privately and at the scene, if possible. Ask open-ended questions, without interjecting judgments or your opinion. Get the facts without placing blame or responsibility. Let witnesses know your positive motive - prevention.
4. **LISTEN** for clues in coworkers' conversations. Unsolicited comments often have merit. Repeat comments back to the individuals to ensure you have understood their meaning correctly.
5. **STUDY** possible causes of the accident or incident, including unsafe conditions or practices.
6. **CONFER** with interested persons including employees, other safety professionals and the injured employee about possible solutions and encourage them to give their own ideas to prevent similar accidents.
7. **WRITE** your accident report giving complete, accurate accounts of the accident. Note names, date, time, shift, equipment, work area, tools, machinery, chemicals, condition of lighting, flooring, temperature and wind, training, tasks, and experience level. These factors may help identify accidents trends that can lead to program improvement.
8. **CORRECT** any hazards identified in the report and follow up to make sure these measures are working.
9. **PUBLICIZE** corrective measures taken so that everyone may learn from the experience. Use safety meetings, memos and break room posters.
10. **TRAIN** employees on the accident investigation process so that they will know what to expect after an incident and can ensure the scene is not compromised.