



Near Hit Reporting

In many instances, “near misses” are often taken lightly and sometimes even result in laughs or workplace jokes. An employee stumbles over something in a walkway but does not actually fall. Laughter erupts from nearby employees who observe the scene – something reminiscent of a sitcom television show. This may seem like a harmless or even comical situation; however, consider the same stumble but, this time, the individual falls to the floor and strikes his/her head, resulting in a brain injury. Suddenly no one is laughing.

The use of the words “near miss” may produce a sigh of relief (or even a chuckle) while the words “near hit” can elicit a more serious and thoughtful response. A near hit is when something occurs, but due to chance, circumstance, inches or seconds, no one gets hurt or no damage is incurred. While a loss is avoided, just as much can be learned from a near hit as from an actual occurrence.

A Near Hit Reporting Program can be a good method for increasing basic hazard recognition and awareness in the workplace. However, simply keeping a log of near hits is not enough. Investigating a near hit to identify root causes and implement preventive actions decreases the odds of experiencing a future injury or loss. This is what risk performance is all about. If you are failing to capture near hits – or failing to learn from them – you are missing a significant opportunity.

While a Near Hit Reporting Program might seem fairly straightforward, the success of the process relies on employee buy-in. The normal tendency is for employees to feel uncomfortable submitting a near hit report in fear of repercussions. Management must first prove the value of such a program and earn employees’ trust before they will willingly participate.

How To Develop A Successful Near Hit Reporting Program

1. Establish a Reporting Culture

- Management can foster a culture comfortable with reporting by discussing near hits they have personally experienced or observed. This openness will help employees better understand what a near hit is.
- It should be communicated clearly and often that no punitive actions will be taken as a result of near hit reporting. Employees should not be scrutinized, blamed or punished.
- Employees should be recognized and/or rewarded for reporting. Various incentives or forms of recognition could be implemented, as appropriate.

2. Investigate Near Hits & Implement Change

- Management can demonstrate a commitment to the process by approaching investigations as a learning event to identify root causes and circumstances that lead to the near hit.
- Use investigation results to make changes that improve risk performance. As near hits are reduced, you decrease the odds of experiencing an event that might result in injury, damage or loss.

If properly implemented, employees will become comfortable with the process and realize the benefits. Routinely identifying and investigating near hits will serve to make your safety process more proactive, rather than waiting to react to an unfortunate event.

If you have questions or would like to develop and implement an effective near hit process for your business, contact a Scott Risk Advisor.

