

Accident Investigation: It's a Must

Why accidents must be investigated

Required by law, all employers are mandated to have an internal investigation of all work injuries and illnesses. The investigation helps identify the **root cause** and reduce the risk of a reoccurrence.

Who should conduct the accident investigation?

Someone in higher management, who is competent in safety and accident investigations, must carefully review the investigation. If the investigation is not adequate, further investigation must be done. Use our **Accident/Investigation Packet** to help guide you through your investigation.



What is a workplace accident?

An **unplanned incident** or event that leads to the injury of an employee and or damage to a company's property. Examples of workplace accidents include:

- **Overexertion:** e.g. lifting or pulling heavy objects that can cause back strains, spinal injuries, and injuries to ligaments and tendons.
- **Falls:** e.g. falls from unsecured ladders or unguarded scaffolds.
- **Slips and falls:** e.g. slips and falls from uneven surfaces and by tripping over tools and other objects on the ground.
- **Repetitive Motion:** An action that is done repeatedly causing injury such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

What is a serious injury?

According to Cal/OSHA, a **serious injury** may result in the following:

- Inpatient hospitalization, regardless of length of time, for other than medical observation or diagnostic testing;
- Amputation
- Loss of an eye
- Serious degree of permanent disfigurement.

All serious injuries must be reported to Cal/OSHA within 8 hours after the employer knows one has occurred.

What is a serious exposure?

Cal/OSHA defines a serious exposure as an exposure to a hazardous substance that occurs as a result of an incident, accident, emergency, or exposure over time and is in a degree or amount sufficient to create a realistic possibility that death or serious physical harm in the future could result from the actual hazard created by the exposure.

Why do accidents happen?

An accident can result from an unsafe action by a person, physical condition, or a combination of both.

Contributing accident factors

There are often multiple contributing factors involved in an accident—most of which can be controlled.

Confidentiality

Accident investigations should be a confidential management report. Investigations should also be confidential because sensitive information in the report could be misinterpreted or used to suggest that the employer has legal liability beyond the normal workers' compensation benefits.

While confidentiality is important, it does not mean that appropriate parts of an in-depth analysis cannot be shared with select employees or groups of employees.