

Near miss reporting: Stop injuries before they happen

Near miss reporting program checklist

- ☐ Write or adapt an organizational near miss reporting policy.
- ☐ Create or adapt a form for reporting near misses.
- ☐ Develop a training for reporting and addressing near misses.
- ☐ Create a process for reviewing forms that have been submitted – who will review them? Who will be assigned to ensure they are analyzed?
- ☐ Create a follow up process to ensure items identified are fixed.
- ☐ Create a way to recognize employees for reporting near misses.



Have you ever seen an incident happen where no one was hurt, but they could have been? Some examples are being nearly run over by a forklift, improperly stored materials falling over but not hitting anyone, and nearly tripping over a cord stretched across a path. These incidents are known as near misses, and creating a program that includes reporting them is a great way to identify workplace hazards before they lead to injuries.

The best near miss programs include documenting near misses, providing a space to discuss and analyze them, and a means to follow up on them to correct them.

Benefits

Aside from preventing injuries, a near miss program is also a great way to engage employees in safety, providing a way for them to report near misses and participate in preventing them in the future. Having a near miss reporting program supports a positive safety culture and improves the psychological safety of employees, making them feel safe for speaking up about hazards. These programs can also reduce costs, improve communication, and help organizations to better identify potential risks.

Key program elements

While anyone can establish a near miss program, these elements help to ensure that the program is successful.

Leadership support

Leaders provide resources for the program and acknowledge program successes.

Non-punitive

There must be no fear of retaliation for reporting near misses to support frequent and honest reporting.

Root causes

Address system or organizational improvements rather than surface causes or blaming employees for near misses.

Take action to fix issues

Follow up on recommendations rather than ignoring them or filing them away.

Communication

Ensure near misses and their fixes are reported to employees and management so they can be addressed.

Organizational policy

Having a near miss policy in place that describes the program and explains its value helps to embed it in business operations.

Easy to access and understand

Create user-friendly forms with clear instructions for all levels of workers.

Frontline supervisor involvement

Provide thorough training for supervisors so they understand and support the program, encouraging workers to report near misses when they happen.

Incentives for reporting

Recognize workers for reporting with praise and/or prize drawings (put all workers reporting a near miss in a drawing).

Train employees on program benefits

Workers will buy-in to the program if they believe and see that all issues are being corrected.

Tracking

All reported near misses should be tracked to ensure what led to the near miss is addressed. It can also create a ratio of non-injury incidents to injury incidents with the goal of having more non-injury incidents.

Summary

A near miss reporting program helps an organization continuously improve their safety and health efforts by encouraging participation from workers at every level. The benefits can be seen beyond safety, resulting in positive impacts in every aspect of an organization.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Review your existing near miss program to look for ways to make it better. If you don't have a near miss program, look at federal OSHA's near miss reporting policy (bit.ly/4iVSnpV) and adapt it for your organization. Adapt federal OSHA's near miss reporting form (bit.ly/3RRjDLa) or create your own. Be sure to invite employees to help develop the program as they will provide valuable insight into the process.
- Group discussion: Talk about workplace incidents that didn't result in injuries at your organization. What process did you use to make changes? What lessons can you take from that process? How much did this decrease injury risk?
- One barrier to an effective near miss reporting program is organizational trust. If you have concerns in that area, complete the trust check activity (saif.com/S1181) to evaluate trust levels at your organization. Review building trust (saif.com/S1125) for strategies to improve organizational trust.