

Accidents

An accident is an unplanned or undesirable event that brings loss or injury. Millions of accidents occur in the United States workplace every year. In 2013, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recorded 4,405 worker fatalities (work-related deaths).

Accidents are primarily a result of an unsafe act and/or an unsafe condition. An unsafe act is an element of unsatisfactory behavior prior to the event which plays a significant role in the accident. Some examples include the following: short cuts, horseplay, carelessness, risk taking and lack of situational awareness. Unsafe conditions can be described as hazards that include but are not limited the following: faulty equipment, tools, improper safety procedures and poor housekeeping.

Job Hazard Analysis is a tool used to avoid accident(s). It looks at the job tasks as a way to identify hazards before they occur. It focuses on the relationship between the worker, the task, the tools and the work environment. Ideally, after you identify uncontrolled hazards, you will take the steps to eliminate or reduce them to an acceptable risk level. An uncontrolled hazard can be high noise levels, lack of machine guarding, poor housekeeping, slips/trips/falls, etc. Elimination of the hazard is the preferred method to mitigate a hazard. Although, personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used if eliminating the hazard isn't possible. For example, high noise levels may require hearing protection (PPE). Poor housekeeping should be cleaned up prior to the start of a job (elimination).

Accident investigation can be another tool used to prevent future incidents. It is used to determine the cause(s) of accidents. This includes: eye witness interviews, viewing the scene of the mishap, reviewing policies/procedures, etc. A good thing to remember when performing an accident investigation is the five W's: Who?, What?, When?, Where? and Why?. Who was involved and who witnessed it? What was the root cause(s) of the incident? When did it occur, day shift, night shift? Where did the situation take place? Why did the accident occur, unsafe condition, unsafe act, etc?

Remember, all accidents are preventable. Focusing on prevention not only saves the employer loss of property and revenue, it may very well save the life of an employee. Every employee should return home at the end of the day the same way they arrived at work. Accidents not only affect the employee in a negative manner, but can affect their family as well.

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References

OSHA.gov