



UWUA Near-Miss Program

An employee may recount a story of a “close call” at work. He or she also may describe the incident as a “near collision” or “narrow escape.” All these terms refer to a near miss. A near-miss incident is an event that, although not resulting in an injury, illness or damage, had the potential to do so.

According to a 2013 case study developed through an alliance between OSHA and the National Safety Council, near misses generally are the result of a faulty process or management system. However, a non-reporting culture can be corrected. Reporting near misses can “significantly improve worker safety and enhance an organization’s safety culture,” according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Safety Council (NSC).

Best practices

Not sure where to start when developing a near-miss reporting system? OSHA and NSC offer best practices:

- Leadership buy-in is critical. Those at the top need to establish a reporting culture that reinforces the importance of identifying and controlling hazards at every opportunity.
- Employees should not be punished for reporting a near miss. Consider allowing anonymity for workers reporting an incident.
- Always investigate a near-miss incident to determine how and why it happened, as well as how to prevent it from occurring again.
- Use the results of a near-miss investigation as an opportunity to improve your organization’s safety system.
- Recognize that reporting near misses is crucial to preventing serious injuries and deaths.

Employee participation

A near-miss reporting system will not work without employee participation. To encourage involvement, OSHA and NSC recommend the following:

- Educate workers on why near-miss reporting is important. Be sure they know how to navigate the reporting process.
- Keep it simple. The reporting system should be easy to use and understand.
- Train new employees on the use of the reporting system.
- Do not let your near-miss reporting system fall by the wayside – actively communicate its importance to all employees.
- Regularly reiterate that your reporting system is non-punitive.
- If initiating an incentives program, be sure to avoid incentives that discourage reporting. A good incentives program will actively recognize the reporting of hazards.
- Celebrate your program's successes.

Questions?

Contact UWUA National Safety Directory Scotty MacNeill 202-706-2719 or john.macneill@uwua.net.