

Near misses – are they important?

Did you know that many companies do not report near misses, and as a result, an injury occurred? OSHA says, “**A near-miss is a potential hazard or incident in which no property was damaged and no personal injury was sustained, but where, given a slight shift in time or position, damage or injury easily could have occurred.**”

Many times, near misses may go unreported for several reasons, such as no company policy or not encouraging it. But reporting near misses is a valuable source of information. This allows organizations the opportunity to identify hazards or weaknesses and address them before an injury occurs.

There are many ways to identify a near miss. They are like accidents, but luckily, no serious injury occurred. Near misses may be identified as:

1. Unsafe conditions such as a slippery walk area.
2. Unsafe behaviors such as someone not following safety protocols or wearing the correct PPE.
3. Minor incidents and injuries that had the potential to be more serious such as using the wrong tool for the job.
4. Events where an injury could have occurred but did not.
5. Events where property damage could have resulted but did not.
6. Events where safety barriers were not being used.
7. Events where potential environmental damage could have resulted but did not.

REMEMBER: This is not an all-encompassing list; your organization’s list may include other types of near misses.

*As you can see, near misses also include potential property damage and potential spills to the environment. *

Some additional tips on near misses:

- Make sure near misses become a part of your Incident Investigation Policy.
- Treat near misses as any other investigation and include determining root causes and talking with witnesses.
- Teach employees and management the importance of near miss reporting.
- Create the safety culture that near misses are an important tool to help reduce or eliminate injuries.
- Discuss near misses at monthly safety meetings or toolbox talks and post on a bulletin board.
- Train employees on how to report near misses.
- Both reporting and investigating on near misses demonstrate a company’s proactive approach to an effective safety program.
- Ensure to follow through with near miss investigations so employees see positive results.

Near misses must be treated just as you would any other incident investigation. Create a culture that helps recognize near misses in the workplace and how to resolve them. If you can demonstrate over time, that reporting near misses are an important piece of your safety program, you are well on your way to success!

For more information, please contact Sedgwick’s Andy Sawan at 330.819.4728 or andrew.sawan@sedgwick.com