

## How to investigate an incident

What do you do if an injury occurs at your company or if there is a near-miss?\* You should **always** investigate these occurrences to figure out what happened and what can be done to prevent a reoccurrence. This is where "why" comes in. Think about how children ask "why?" They don't stop after asking one time. And they don't accept the answer "just because." When you are investigating an incident, don't stop asking why until you get to the very root of the problem. Then develop a solution and assure workers are appropriately trained.

### Here's an incident example:

You have just received a report that an employee injured his ankle. After making sure the employee's emergency needs are met, it's time to start your investigation.

*ASK: What happened?*

**ANSWER:** Joe slipped exiting the cab.

*ASK: Why did Joe slip?*

**ANSWER:** He was facing out when he exited the cab.

*ASK: Why was he facing out?*

**ANSWER:** His hands were full.

*ASK: Why were his hands full?*

**ANSWER:** He was carrying delivery papers and a coffee cup.

*ASK: Why was he carrying the items down?*

**ANSWER:** First stop always offers him coffee and he needs papers for the delivery.

*ASK: What other alternatives are there to carrying the cup and papers?*

**ANSWER:** Papers can be put in the map pocket and retrieved from ground level. Cup can be tucked in map pocket or placed on cab floor board to be retrieved from ground level on the passenger side.

*ASK: How can you make sure there is not a reoccurrence of this event?*

**ANSWER:** Revisit three points of contact training with all drivers. Point out specific solutions, such as map pocket for paper and floor board from passenger side for cups. Insist that all items be stowed so hands are free before entering or exiting the cab.



### Consider the elements:

Be sure to address all involved elements. Here are some examples.

#### Equipment

Tractor, trailer, liftgate, pallet jack or hand truck.

#### Environment

Light, dark, wet, cold, indoors or out, shadows, or windy.

#### Employee

- Are there written procedures for the task to be accomplished, if so, was the employee provided training?
- Is the employee physically capable of carrying out the tasks?
- Did the employee wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)?
- Is the job structured in a way that tempts workers to deviate from procedures, such as if there is not enough time to complete tasks?

#### Management

- Is management trained in hazard recognition?
- Did management anticipate the hazard and the risk?
- Did management anticipate and correct potential deviations from the procedure?
- Is management's role in hazard recognition and corrective action clearly defined and assigned?



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\* A near-miss is an incident that could have resulted in an injury, but didn't. All near-misses should be investigated to make sure they never result in an injury.