



Greater Houston  
Chapter

# Toolbox Talk

## Incident Investigation

Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter Name/Job Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

An incident investigation should be required whenever an unplanned event occurs. If the time between the announcement of the incident and the start of the investigation is very short, then the information that can be obtained will be most accurate. Statements of remembered facts is always more dependable when people have not become biased by the opinions of others, and the passage of time.

### Why should an incident be investigated?

- The purpose of the investigation process is to discover all of the underlying (surface & root) causes of the incident and to alter some process or procedure in order to prevent the incident from happening again.
- To achieve this, accurate information about what happened is necessary. Such information includes: events that led up to the incident, all contributors, and which processes or procedures enabled the outcome.
- A crucial step in the investigation process is the assurance (issued long before an actual incident) to possible witnesses that the purpose of any investigation will not include a search for someone to blame or punish. The only exception to this will be in cases where the findings reveal a deliberate act (sabotage, willful unsafe behavior, or attempt to cover another act) by one or more of those involved. If a potential witness has the slightest fear of management's motive during an investigation, then credible statements will be impossible, and the eventual conclusions will probably be flawed.

### Incident Site Conditions

- Conditions at an incident scene can change faster than the statements of witnesses when there is a delay in compiling the facts.
- Much evidence corrupted because it is removed or altered before any notice is taken or any record made. Tampering with evidence can lead to changes in processes or procedures that make future situations even worse and can also lead to legal problems when outside agencies are included in the investigations of the serious incidents.
- The **contact phase** of an incident is brief and initiates a wide spectrum of activity. People generally react emotionally rather than respond thoughtfully when adrenaline is involved. Injured people might be moved. Equipment and objects might be moved to facilitate the treatment of injuries, and to provide passage or restore work.
- Prompt arrival at the scene allows the investigator to observe evidence before or as it requires movement, removal or alteration.

**Facts about Incidents**

- The investigation process gathers the facts from all available input (physical evidence, surrounding circumstances, witness statements, peripheral pressures, etc). It then develops sets of findings and proposes logical scenarios and all of this is necessary, but the final part of the process is the only piece that generates any real value.
- Anyone can learn from mistakes. The value is the achievement of a better outcome whenever identical or similar circumstances are repeated.
- Any event that causes surprise or a question of risk should be reported to supervision immediately and subsequently to project management to start the investigation process.
- The investigation of all close call (a.k.a. “near miss”) events provides project management teams with an opportunity to prevent injuries and other real losses that can result when no learning or change is allowed to occur during these less severe wake-up calls.

**Further Safety Recommendations by Meeting Attendees**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

**Meeting Attended By:**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_