

## **SECTION 7: ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION**

An accident is broadly defined as an undesired event that results in physical harm to a person or damage to property and/or the interruption of a process. It also includes events that result in a non-injury, a near miss, an occupational illness, or exposure to a hazardous substance. The Asotin-Anatone School District encourages accident prevention through aggressive investigation and analysis as a defense against hazards in the workplace. Investigators (such as supervisors, the superintendent, Safety Committee members, employee representative) must determine the possible consequences that could take place if the situation is not corrected and take appropriate action based upon those findings (i.e. investigate, report, correct, etc.).

The purpose of an accident investigation is to find the facts. The facts will then serve as a guide to the conditions that caused the accident. The facts should identify the “why” of the accident as well as the “who, what, when and where.” Since every accident includes a sequence of contributing causes, it is possible to prevent a recurrence by recognizing and eliminating those causes. The removal of just a single cause can prevent a recurrence of an accident/incident.

An investigation should be made as soon after the accident as possible. A delay of only a few hours may result in important evidence to be destroyed or removed by mistake. A sample accident investigation report form is found in Appendix B.

Start with reviewing the accident scene. Reconstruct the events that led up to the accident. If necessary, consider taking pictures, measure, and draw a diagram. Get a list of witnesses and interview the employee directly involved. The following information lists a variety of subject areas that should be included in an accident investigation. Review the following items:

- Work Characteristics- What is the type of work activity and the size of the operation? How many employees are involved?
- Environment- Was the weather a contributing factor?
- Time Factors- The time of day, and how it relates to the shift.
- Employee Characteristics- What is the age, health, sex, work experience? How often is the work activity repeated? How often has the employee engaged in such work? How much training and when was the last training?
- A Narrative Description- Explain what the person was doing. What objects were involved? What actions and movements led to the accident?
- Equipment Characteristics- If equipment is involved, describe the type, brand, model, size, and any distinguishing features, its condition, and the specific part of the equipment involved.
- Characteristics of the Task- The general task being performed (removing a tire from bus) and the specific activity (using a power impact wrench). The posture

and location of employee (kneeling in front of left front tire). Working alone or with others.

- Preventive Measures- What personal protective equipment was being worn? What kind of training did the employee receive for the task he or she was performing? Did procedures exist? Were they written? Were they followed? Where was the supervisor at the time of the accident?
- Accident Severity- The nature of the injury or injuries and parts of the body affected.

After reviewing these statements, the final analysis should suggest specific corrective action or actions that will prevent recurrences of the sequence of events that led to the accident. Corrective action must focus on such things as eliminating unsafe conditions (mechanical or physical hazard) and correcting unsafe acts (employee deviates from instruction, policy, procedure or work practice).

The following steps should be followed in the investigation process:

### **Minor Injuries** (Requiring doctor/outpatient care)-

After the emergency actions following an accident, an investigation of the accident will be conducted by the immediate supervisor in conjunction with any witnesses to the accident, to determine the causes. The findings of the investigation shall be documented and attached to the Employee Incident Report Form and submitted to Human Resources (HR will forward a summary to the Safety Committee).

### **Major Injuries** (Fatality or multiple hospitalizations)-

The superintendent is to be notified immediately by the person in charge. An investigation under the direction of the superintendent will be conducted. The investigation team may include the risk manager, loss control specialist, supervisor of the injured person(s), a representative from the Safety Committee, and an employee representative.

In the case of death, probable death or the inpatient hospitalization of any employee, the superintendent will contact the nearest office of the Department of Labor and Industries in person or by phone at 1-800-423-7233 (see Section 6).

### **Near Misses**

A near-miss accident is defined as an unplanned event where damage resulted but there was no personal injury to employees or where damage did not result but the likelihood of personal injury to the employee was great. If the conditions which permitted the near-miss or "close call" to exist are not eliminated, they will continue to exist, making it likely that additional accidents could occur which could eventually result in personal injury to the employee. Whenever there is an incident that did not, but could have, resulted in serious injury to an employee, the incident will be investigated by the supervisor.

## Accident Prevention Program

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The school district Safety Committee will review the incident reports at each of its regularly scheduled meetings.

The superintendent will review all reports looking for any trends, hazardous conditions or hazardous practices, and may decide to investigate any incident or accident.

Reference: WAC 296-800-320