

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION TIPS

- Accident investigation should be done promptly. This will help in collecting the most accurate information before conditions change.
- Ask questions first that focus on “what” happened. By concentrating on the events that occurred which relate “details” such as time, location, and objects involved in the early questioning, there is a better chance of getting factual data.
- Concentrate fact gathering on what caused the accident to occur and not on the result (injury or illness) of the accident. The same accident could have results that may range from near miss to fatality.
- Try to talk first with witnesses on an individual basis so their opinions will not be swayed by others.
- Use open-ended questions when interviewing witnesses to avoid influencing their opinion. For example, it would be better to ask a witness to “tell me what you saw,” rather than questions such as “do you think the injured person committed an unsafe act before the accident occurred?”
- Listen! It is difficult to avoid interrupting someone when you have a question, but let people explain what they saw or know in their own words, as completely as possible, before trying to ask more questions or clarify information.
- Try to gather your information with people at the actual accident scene. This will enable a clearer picture of the events that can be obtained while trying to recall what happened from an office interview.
- Get recommendations from people who do the same job. Ask what kinds of corrective measures might prevent a similar accident.
- Look at facts obtained to determine action that will eliminate or reduce the burden of the employee trying to “remember proper actions” or “being careful.” Whenever possible, take corrective actions that design out the hazard or physically guard the employee from the hazard if it can’t be removed.
- An accident report is most useful for one thing -- to provide information that can be used to keep a similar situation from occurring. Make sure your information is objective, factual, and followed through with appropriate corrective measures.