

Safety Code of Practice 09: Part 2

1st Edition, March 2013

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION



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1 INTRODUCTION

Safety Code of Practice 9 Part 1 describes the University procedures for reporting incidents. This Safety Code of Practice, Part 2, gives guidance on how to investigate incidents and accidents. All incidents must be investigated unless they are so trivial that they can be ignored.

2 INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

2.1 Why do we need to investigate incidents?

Investigating incidents is good management practice and a University requirement, for the following reasons:

- To identify both the immediate and underlying causes (there is rarely a single cause)
- To learn from mistakes and put measures in place to prevent a recurrence
- To reappraise existing risk assessments
- To review the effectiveness of risk control measures
- To identify activities or jobs causing the greatest number of incidents
- To satisfy legal requirements for accident reporting and recording
- To satisfy the expectation of the public and injured parties, who expect action following a serious incident
- To obtain details which might be needed if the incident later becomes subject to an insurance claim or legal action

2.2 What should be investigated and by whom?

Heads of Schools/Services and line managers / Academic Supervisors (or equivalent, such as Fieldwork Supervisors) are responsible for ensuring that each incident in their area is investigated. Normally the investigation will be undertaken by the Area Health & Safety Co-ordinator. Health & Safety Services, Occupational Health staff, technical staff, suppliers or engineers may be involved, depending on the nature of the incident. When deciding which incidents to investigate and to what depth, you need to consider not only the seriousness of the outcome (i.e. the severity of the injury), but also the potential consequences.

Near misses and property damage that do not actually result in injury or ill health, but could have, are often overlooked. If injury or significant damage could have resulted, these should be reported and investigated, as the remedial action taken may help prevent an injury in the future.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and/or the University insurers may also decide to carry out an investigation. You should inform your Head of School / Service and the Head of Health & Safety Services of any such requests as soon as possible.

Health and Safety Representatives from a recognised Trade Union are entitled to carry out inspections where there has been a reportable accident, dangerous occurrence or when a reportable occupational disease has been contracted.

The level of involvement by others will generally be related to the actual or potential significance of the incident. In any case the line manager should carry out an immediate investigation to ensure that the situation is made safe and important evidence is not lost.

If a serious incident occurs, managers should, as soon as practicable, a) inform Health and Safety Services and b) initiate a thorough local investigation. Summary investigation details should be reported on the initial Incident Report Form. This will need to be supplemented with an additional, more detailed report from the accident investigation. In most cases of serious incidents, Health & Safety Services will either assist or direct the investigation.

The following Incident Investigation Checklist should assist investigators to gather sufficient information, to ask the right questions and consider underlying causative factors. It is not an exhaustive list and will need to be adapted to each particular incident. An Investigation Report Form is attached as Appendix 1. This can be downloaded from the Health and Safety Website *Forms* page. Investigation Reports must be sent to Health & Safety Services.

2.3 Checklist for investigating incidents

i. Obtain the basic facts

- Date and time of incident
- Names and contact details of injured / affected person(s), age, sex, occupation / course of study (if a student)
- The nature of the injury / ill health / assault / property damage sustained, details of treatment received, hospital attended, length of stay, length of absence from work/study
- Location details and layout of the area in which the incident occurred
- Details of witnesses / people first on the scene of the incident / first aiders who attended
- Condition and description of plant or equipment involved (before and after the incident) - including make, model, serial number, safety devices provided etc.
- If appropriate, take photographs, draw sketches and take measurements to record the scene of the incident before things are moved, repaired and cleaned up. The University may need this evidence later.
- Any hazardous substances in use or present (obtain Safety Data Sheets if they are not already available), if applicable to the incident
- Names, contact details of any contractors involved, you may need to contact them later.

ii. Establish the circumstances of the incident

- Events leading up to the incident
- What was being done at the time, was this unusual or different from normal?
- What were the immediate causes of the incident – how did it happen?
- If investigating a case of disease or ill health, is there any evidence linking this to work activities?
- What instructions were given to those involved, before the incident?
- What were the established methods of work and procedures?
- What was the behaviour and actions of individuals before, during and after the incident?
- What was the role of supervisors and managers in the activities concerned?

iii. Identify the underlying causes of the incident

There is often far more to accidents than simply unsafe acts by individuals or unsafe conditions, you need to consider why the circumstances leading to the incident occurred, and went unnoticed and unchecked. How did things get this far? Consider the following:

- Has anything similar happened before? Check the accident record, ask around.
- Has the problem been mentioned before, when, by whom, what action was taken?

- Was this risk known and had a risk assessment been completed for this activity / substance / these premises, is it suitable and sufficient?
- Were University or local guidelines, policies or rules being followed?
- What control measures and safety equipment were identified by the risk assessment – are they still in place and effective (were the individuals doing the work aware of these)?
- Are any management or supervision failures evident?
- Was communication between the relevant parties adequate and effective?
- What was the level of competence of those involved – including the nature of any training, instruction or information provided, was it adequate?
- Are there any shortcomings in the original installation or design, if relevant?
- Were adequate performance standards set and monitored by management?
- Was there an adequate system for maintenance and cleaning of premises or equipment?
- Were systems of work that individuals were expected to follow actually being followed in practice?, were these systems workable and realistic (if not, why not?)
- Was suitable personal protective equipment provided, was it effective (if not, why not?)
- Is record keeping adequate?

iv. Establish whether the initial management and emergency response was adequate

- Was the initial response to the incident by the University prompt and effective? Consider the actions taken to make the situation safe, or to deal with any continuing risks.
- Was the response to the incident by the Emergency Services or other external agencies, prompt and effective?
- Was the fire fighting and first aid response suitable, were correct spillage procedures known and followed?
- Was the incident promptly reported to the relevant parties (if not, why not)?
- How was the injured person treated and supported –was this adequate?
- Were the needs of witnesses adequately addressed (de-briefing, counselling etc)?

v. Identify and record any further action needed to prevent a recurrence

You should assess or reassess the risks of this particular activity / equipment / area. When doing this you should question the adequacy of existing control measures and work methods and any discrepancy between these and what was intended. You will need to establish if the existing controls meet current standards and are adequate to effectively control risks.

In particular, you may need to:

- Improve physical safeguards or safety features or modify design or workplace layout
- Improve existing work methods or introduce new safe working procedures
- Provide additional safety equipment e.g. lifting aids, personal protective equipment
- Produce or review risk assessments
- Update written health & safety rules, standards or policies, communicate these to employees / students, as appropriate
- Improve communications systems
- Make changes to or provide extra training, supervision or information sources
- Introduce better testing, maintenance or cleaning arrangements
- Introduce inspection, monitoring and audit systems
- Review similar risks in other sections

Once you have identified what action is required to prevent a recurrence of the incident in question, you should record your recommendations in the form of an action plan, making it clear

what is required, by when and who will be responsible for implementing the improvements required.

Lessons learnt should be shared by other groups carrying out similar activities within the School/Service, or more widely across campus.

Remember:

- Always talk to the injured person and witnesses to get their account of events
- Verify the facts – do not make assumptions about what happened
- The most important thing is not to apportion blame, but to learn from mistakes, so as to continually improve health and safety standards

Appendix 1: Health and Safety Incident Investigation Form

Health and Safety Services Incident Number:	
RIDDOR Reference (if known/applicable):	
Date of Incident:	
School/Service:	
Department/Area:	
Name of Injured Person (if applicable):	
Injured Person contact details (if not already provided on Incident Report Form) :	
Date(s) of investigation:	
Investigated by:	
Persons contributing to the investigation:	

1. INCIDENT DETAILS - gather the facts
Circumstances & sequence of events
Injury / ill health / damage sustained & treatment given:
Details of plant / equipment / substances / location (include photographs and sketches)
Witnesses (attach statements)

Management / emergency response to the incident

2. INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

Immediate cause(s)

Underlying and contributory factors

Comments

Recommendations and conclusion (what action is needed, by when and by whom?)

Name of Author:

Date of Report:

Appendix 2: Version control

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
X.X	H&S	Every four years	XXXXX	XX/XX/XX
X.X	H&S	Annually	XXXXX	XX/XX/XX