

When Should You Fill Out an Incident Report?

The Complete Guide

What is an Incident Report?

An incident report formally documents workplace accidents, events, or near misses. These reports are crucial for capturing the details of the events that occur in situations like damage to company property, personal injury, health and safety issues, security breaches, or personnel misconduct. Companies should file incident reports because they give clear documentation of any incidents that happen to occur in the workplace.

What is the Purpose of Incident Reporting?

Incident reporting is designed to provide formal and written documentation to describe the causes of workplace accidents and incidents. The reports should detail actions taken at present to address the incident and the reports can serve as frameworks for preventing similar incidents from occurring in the future.

Top 3 Benefits of Incident Reporting at Work

Incident reports are much more than a record-keeping tool. Organizations, employees, management, and even authorities benefit from the information provided in incident reports. While these reports provide many valuable resources to an organization, here are the top three benefits of incident reporting while at work:

1. Immediate Action Reinforcement

When an accident or incident occurs in the workplace, it benefits a company to have the report filed in a timely manner, with accurate information. Reports should outline where things have gone wrong within the organization so that measures can be implemented to ensure these types of accidents or mishaps are avoided in the future. When a company takes incident reporting seriously, it sends a clear message that the organization prioritizes workplace safety and the business is accounting for all incidents and events, both big and small.

2. Communication of Hazards and Threats

Companies utilize incident reports to notify team members of workplace hazards. Once a report is filed, company leadership teams can disseminate the reports to employees and review the reports in a group setting. A company-wide report review will make the entire team aware of the factors that contributed to an incident so that teams will be more likely to notice other lapses in safety and then report them before another incident occurs.

3. Process Improvement

The incident report provides clear and formal documentation of what went wrong and how companies can prevent similar damage from happening in the future. Incident reports show where there are gaps in an organization's structures, methods, or processes. This knowledge enables management teams to create plans for improving company processes and for determining which policies and regulations are helping to create a safe workplace.

What is Considered an Incident?

Workplace incidents include a variety of events. While no incident will be the same, each one will cause disruption, create dangerous or harmful risks, and introduce negative impacts on the workplace and employees.

Workplace Incident Categories

Workplace incidents can be categorized according to their severity. Some incidents will result in significant injury or property damage, whereas other events will simply be considered close calls. While many types of incidents can happen, here are the most common types of incidents that occur in the workplace today:

1. Positive Observations

Positive observations in incident reporting highlight the kind of behavior a company wants to encourage, and positive observations are the most common incidents among all workplaces. These observations validate a job well done and serve as concrete examples of how employees should conduct themselves in the workplace. Wearing proper equipment when required or showing a thorough knowledge during a tornado drill are examples of positive observations.

Positive observations serve not only as ideals, but they also help organizations prevent harmful incidents from happening. Leadership teams can solidify their company culture of safety and risk management by noting what a team is doing well and highlighting how the team is practicing safety at work.

2. Unsafe Acts

Unsafe acts do not necessarily result in immediate danger or harm to property or personnel. However, unsafe acts are just that: unsafe. These incidents should be addressed, and plans should be put in place to reduce the number of these events. Shining a light on unsafe acts can help companies to draw attention to how teams can be more diligent about safety and how the team can work toward a safer workplace for all.

3. Near Misses

A near miss refers to any situation where no one was harmed, but it was a close call. A near miss can shake up a team, especially if the risks or potential for injury were significant. Companies should take near misses seriously and they should use those events as educational opportunities to teach their teams the importance of workplace safety.