Close Calls – Take a Close Look at Close Calls Meeting Kit

When a “close call” happens, it should immediately send up a red warning flag that something was wrong, unplanned, unexpected, and could happen again. The next time it happens, it could result in serious damage, injury or death. For every accident there are usually several contributing factors, most of which can be controlled.

ROOT CAUSES

The best way to prevent the reoccurrence of an accident is by looking at close calls. By investigating the **root causes** of an accident, steps can be taken to eliminate the hazard and improve the work system.

Look for immediate and underlying causes. An immediate cause may be an unsafe condition like a mechanical failure or it could be an unsafe action by an employee. The underlying cause could be poor machine maintenance, a missing guard, a crowded work area or a lack of training.

REPORT AND DOCUMENT INCIDENTS

All incidents should be reported to the supervisor so that accident/injury report forms can be completed.

Once an investigation is completed, solutions should be sought to prevent the accident from occurring again.

LEARN FROM CLOSE CALLS/NEAR MISSES

- Employees need to understand that the purpose of studying near misses is not to punish employees or assign blame; it is to improve workplace safety and reduce injuries.
- Reporting close calls leads to improvements in work areas and job procedures while allowing the correction of unsafe

conditions before an injury occurs.

Workers should inspect the work area daily for unsafe conditions or unsafe actions and, if found, report them to the supervisor. Hazard awareness is key to preventing accidents before they happen. Take steps to eliminate hazards as soon as they are discovered. Learn the real lesson from close calls. They can happen again and again until they cause injury, so tell your supervisor about every accident, no matter how minor it may seem at the time. You never know when an incident may be repeated and result in an injury or even death.

HUMAN ERROR AND OTHER HAZARDS: Most close calls result from a combination of factors. Although **human error** is often one cause, **other hazards** often play a role as well. These include:

- Poor lighting
- Inadequate ventilation
- Lack of a warning sign
- A missing machine guard
- Lack of effective safety rules

To prevent a looming accident, you have to move quickly and seize the opportunity to eliminate the hazards that caused the close call. Historical data has shown time and again that serious accidents are almost always preceded by warnings and near misses.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

An investigation cannot take place if the near miss is not reported accurately. Setting up a successful safety management program to ensure near misses are reported and investigated is an important step in reducing occurrences of serious incidents.

- Create a clear definition of a near miss.
- Make a written disclosure and report the identified near miss.
- Prioritize reports and classify information for future actions.
- Distribute information to the people involved in the near miss.

- Analyze the causes of the problem.
- Identify solutions to the problem.
- Disseminate the solutions to the people impacted.
- Resolve all actions and check any changes.

FINAL WORD

There are few “accidents” that happen without some advance warning. These advance warnings come in the form of close calls or near misses. Don’t dismiss a close call, instead talk about it and fix it.