Learning from Close Calls Meeting Kit

WHAT IS A NEAR MISS?

The definition of a near miss is easy to remember. It’s an event where there isn’t any property damage or injuries – but there could have been. Near misses happen more often than employers, and employees, think.

Human nature means we often want to forget a near miss. They are moments where we narrowly avoid injury or damage. A near miss means you’ve gotten lucky. Do not rely on luck when it comes to safety. A close call is a red flag – and a warning.

NEAR MISSES: IMPORTANT CHANCES FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES TO LEARN

A lot of people don’t consider near misses worth documenting. After all, no one is hurt. If nothing was broken, then there’s nothing to look in to – right? A near miss is a chance to ask an important question: “‘What can we do differently next time to prevent it?’”

IDENTIFY CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Pick out all of the contributing factors. Did a machine break down or malfunction? Was the employee tired or distracted? Make a report from your findings.

PLAN TO MAKE CHANGE

A completed near miss report offers important insights. Changes can be organized into three categories:

- **Safety policy changes.** Are new or better safety steps needed

to help employees?
- **Engineering changes.** Do you need to repair or replace equipment?
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE) changes.** Do employees need more protection?

Change can be difficult for management. The business may require new equipment, training, or computer programs. Show employees that their reports are making a difference.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Investigations 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 actions and check changes.

Avoid The Blame Game

Do not assign blame for close calls. There is the need for a blame-free environment.

Questions to ask about near misses

- Were the conditions unsafe?
- Was there proper lighting?
- Was the proper equipment or tool being used for the task?
- Was the task too repetitious?

- Were there enough people for the task?
- Was the person trained in that task?
- Was the person using unsafe work practices?

FINAL WORD

A close call is a warning of an incident in the making. We need to accept these warnings and look for the causes to prevent future injuries.