Near-Miss to Case Study: Learning from Close Calls Before They Cost Stats and Facts

FACTS

- **A Near-Miss Is a Warning, Not a Lucky Break:** A close call that produces no injury still signals that a hazard exists, a control failed, and the same event can happen again — next time with a different outcome.
- **The Pyramid Is Real:** For every serious workplace injury there are approximately 29 minor injuries, 300 near-misses, and over 1,000 unsafe acts. Near-misses are the easiest point at which to intervene.
- **Unreported Means Unresolved:** A near-miss that goes unreported leaves the hazard in place. The next worker in the same situation faces the same risk with no corrective action taken.
- **Fear Silences the Warning System:** Workers who believe reporting will result in blame or discipline will not report close calls — and the organization loses its earliest and most actionable safety data.
- **Pattern Recognition Saves Lives:** Most serious incidents are preceded by a pattern of near-misses involving the same hazard. Identifying that pattern before an injury occurs is the entire purpose of a near-miss program.
- **Investigation Is Not Optional:** Documenting a near-miss without investigating its root cause provides little value. The corrective action — not the report — is what prevents the next incident.
- **Case Studies Turn Close Calls into Training:** When near-misses are analyzed and shared across a team, they become some of the most effective safety training tools available —

real events, real hazards, no injury attached.

STATS

- Approximately 3 billion near-misses occur annually in U.S. workplaces, yet most go unreported and unaddressed, according to occupational safety research.
- For every serious workplace injury there are nearly 300 near-misses and over 1,000 unsafe acts, according to OSHA.
- A 2025 National Safety Council report found organizations with formal near-miss reporting programs saw a 23 percent reduction in major accidents within three years.
- The same report found that 78 percent of serious workplace incidents were preceded by one or more unreported near-misses.
- A 2022 Canadian Society of Safety Engineering survey found 58 percent of workers believed reporting a near-miss would negatively affect their job or reputation.
- WorkSafeBC analysis of forestry incidents found that in the three years leading up to a fatality, the same site had an average of five documented near-misses involving similar hazards.