

Near Misses – Danger that is Too Close for Comfort

What's at Stake?

A near miss, or close call, is an event that almost results in an injury, illness or property damage. Think back to a close call you had. Was a split second, a few inches, or dumb luck the only thing between you and death?

What's the Danger?

Near misses are red flags that something is dangerously wrong with a process, task, piece of equipment or tool, or something in the work environment. Too often these red flags are ignored, not reported or not corrected. This leaves room for the following to get too close to you and your co-workers:

- Catastrophic equipment failure.
- Fire and explosions.
- Chemical spills and other environmental disasters.
- Serious injury and death.

How to Protect Yourself

The best thing you can do to protect yourself and your co-workers is to speak up. Report near misses that you witness or that happen to you. This is easier said than done sometimes because you might:

- Fear getting in trouble or be embarrassed about your part in the incident.
- Not understand the importance near miss reporting plays in accident prevention.
- Be worried about breaking a safety or production record for so many days without an incident; or
- Be discouraged by the lack of action when similar issues

have been reported.

While keeping silent may seem like the easy way out, think about how you would feel if a co-worker died because of a hazard that you knew existed but didn't report?

Some other ways you can protect yourself include:

- Be aware of how your co-workers conduct themselves and work together to prevent injury and safeguard one another from incidents. Compare your routines and habits with theirs and share tips.
- Take responsibility for the equipment or machinery you use. If equipment or machinery causes you problems or appears to be broken, stop using it and report it to your supervisor.
- Ensure you understand and follow all safety procedures. If you have questions or have ideas for a safer way to do something talk to your supervisor.

Final Word

Don't give danger a second chance to get too close for comfort. Report all near misses immediately so they can be investigated and hazards can be corrected.