



Public Sector Safety Talks—APERMA

Close Calls – Take a Close Look at Close Calls

A “close call” or an accident without injury is easy to shrug off and forget. But, there is a danger in brushing off accidents that don’t hurt, harm or cause damage. 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 managed. The best way to prevent the reoccurrence of an accident is by looking at those “close calls.” By exploring the root causes of an accident, steps can then be taken to eliminate the hazard and improve the work system.

Sometimes, there are multiple causes for an accident. Common triggers involve equipment (unguarded machinery), environment (poor lighting or noise level), people (procedures not understood or not followed) or management (allowed shortcuts). Don’t rush to a conclusion. Examine the facts and find what’s missing. 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.

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 implemented to prevent the accident from occurring again. Solutions may involve engineering controls, administrative controls, additional training or increased communication between management and workers.

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 and learn from close calls. 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.



Any questions or concerns about the above material, please feel free to contact Jim Bergemann or Kathi Williams at 800-274-2788.

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