

## Accident Investigation

Supervisors, Department Safety Coordinators (DSCs), and safety committee members: Do you know how to conduct a thorough investigation after an accident occurs in your department? Are you aware that serious injuries require the immediate notification of the Office of Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S)? Investigation of accidents is not only required by law, it can also help prevent future accidents. Follow the steps outlined below to comply with the law, improve procedures and conditions, and create a safer work environment.

After an  
accident occurs

The basic steps to take following any accident are:

1. Provide medical attention and secure the scene.
2. Notify all appropriate parties.
3. Gather information (including interviewing witnesses).
4. Analyze the information, identifying causes.
5. Prepare a report, assigning corrective actions.
6. Ensure all corrective actions are implemented.

Provide medical  
attention and  
secure the scene

Attending to an injured worker's medical needs is always the first priority after an accident. Be sure that it is safe to approach the victim by checking for environmental causes or other still-present dangers that may have caused the illness or injury. After treatment of the injury has begun, secure the scene of the accident to ensure that conditions are not altered before investigators can examine them. This may mean keeping the room closed or using barricade tape or rope to keep others out of the immediate area. Retain broken or defective equipment so it can be examined. Take note of anyone who witnessed the incident or was in the area immediately before or after the incident. Call the UC Police Department (UCPD) if the accident may involve vandalism or other crimes. UCPD can also provide assistance in securing the area around serious accidents.

Notify all  
appropriate  
parties

Notify the appropriate supervisor immediately following any accident. The supervisor is responsible for investigating the cause of the accident since he/she is most familiar with the hazards and precautions of the task, as well as the training and capabilities of the injured worker.

Within 24 hours of your department's knowledge of the incident, an Employer's Report of Incident form must be completed and faxed to Disability Management Services at 642-6505. The form and additional information are available at:

<https://uhs.berkeley.edu/facstaff/disability-management/workerscomp>.

In addition, EH&S must be notified immediately if any of the following occurs:

- Worker fatality
- Loss of any body part (e.g., a fingertip)
- Possible permanent disfigurement
- Inpatient hospitalization

In these cases EH&S is required to notify Cal/OSHA, who will send an inspector to the accident scene. Cal/OSHA will expect that an investigation has begun before its representatives arrive. (Any agency inspection is independent of the University's inspection.) When Cal/OSHA arrives on the scene, contact EH&S again so that a campus health and safety specialist is present during the agency's investigation. EH&S should also be



## Gather information

## Analyze the information

## Prepare a report, assigning corrective actions

## Prevent a recurrence of the accident

notified whenever an accident investigation requires technical expertise beyond that available in the department.

In all cases, the DSC and the safety committee should be notified so that they can track the implementation of appropriate corrective actions. EH&S can help identify and contact campus committees or organizations that may also have an interest in the incident.

Familiarize yourself with the accident scene and the conditions leading up to the incident. Take thorough notes and make sketches or take photos or videos if appropriate. In addition, examine documentation relevant to the people or materials involved, such as applicable instruction manuals, material safety data sheets (MSDSs), and safety training records.

Interview anyone who witnessed the accident or the events before or after. Interview witnesses separately and as soon after the accident as possible. Conduct interviews in a “neutral” setting rather than in the supervisor’s office. Maintain an impartial tone when asking questions and avoid assigning blame. Ask open-ended questions intended to elicit detailed information rather than simple yes or no answers.

Next, analyze the information you have gathered to determine:

- What was the immediate cause of the accident?
- What other (contributing) causes may have played some part in setting up the accident?
- What employee actions or workplace conditions may have led to those causes?
- Were safe work procedures established, and were they adequate?
- Was adequate training provided on the procedures?
- Were the procedures regularly implemented and enforced?

Prepare a written incident investigation report that details the information gathered, identifies all contributing causes, and assigns corrective actions to responsible parties for each contributing factor. The “Employer’s Report of Incident” form prepared for Disability Management Services can serve as a starting point, or may be adequate for minor incidents. The report should not unduly assess blame but rather spell out the specific corrective measures needed to prevent similar accidents from happening. The supervisor’s input is particularly important to identify appropriate actions to prevent a similar injury. Forward copies of the investigation report to the DSC and the safety committee, so they can track and help ensure the implementation of corrective actions.

Finally, the supervisor or other responsible party must ensure that the corrective actions called for in the report are implemented in a timely fashion. DSCs and safety committees should review accidents to verify that each has been investigated and that all corrective actions have been completed. The primary goal of an accident investigation is to prevent recurrence. Share the lessons learned from the accident investigation with other supervisors and DSCs with similar operations so they might implement the identified corrective actions. For assistance investigating an accident, call EH&S at 642-3073. To report a serious injury call EH&S at 642-3073 during weekdays or UCPD at 911 (campus phone) or (510) 642-3333 (cell phone) after hours.

