

Hampshire College Supervisor Accident Investigation Report Guidelines to Successful Investigation

While these guidelines provide a framework for your accident investigation, use your common sense and discretion when conducting your investigation and completing the Supervisor Accident Investigation Report. Assess each incident on its own merits, taking into account the nature and severity of the injury, and what conditions and circumstance may have contributed to it.

Do not merely report what happened. The fact that “John” tripped and fell may have caused his injury, but you must explore what circumstances caused him to trip. Asking the appropriate questions is critical to finding the cause of an injury or accident, and your inquiry should not be limited to those questions listed below. The purpose of the investigation is to find a solution to an existing problem or correct a condition so that there will not be a recurrence. You should identify hazards and attempt to find a solution by going beyond a mere recitation of what is on the “First Report of Injury”.

Do not ask the employee to fill out the Supervisor Accident Investigation Report. You have to take the lead to finding a cause, and correcting the problem. Also, keep in mind that the problem may not be task specific. Family trouble, economic problems, non-work health problems may be a source of an employee’s inattention or change his/her normal tendency to avoid personal injury. Knowing an employee and their work habits will help you anticipate problems.

The investigation should begin by answering the questions: who, what, when, where, and how. Various steps are involved in gathering this information including: discussing the accident with the injured employee, interviewing any witnesses to the accident, inspection of the accident location, your knowledge of operations and work methods, and review of maintenance and training records. The Supervisor Accident Investigation Report leads you through the following questions:

- What was the employee doing?
- Was the employee following established work procedures (e.g., proper lifting)?
- Was the work a routine task or something the employee has not done before or does infrequently?
- If the employee was carrying materials, what were they, how heavy were they, should the employee have asked for help?
- If environmental factors (e.g., temperature, snow/ice, lighting) contributed to the accident, what were they and how did they contribute?
- What other conditions in the workplace (e.g., tools, walking surfaces, vehicles) contributed to the accident?
- Was personal protective equipment (e.g., goggles, gloves, proper footwear) being used? If not should it have been?
- What employee actions (e.g., rushing, choosing the wrong tool) contributed to the accident?

Do not, however, restrict yourself to these questions. Let your knowledge of the work and circumstances of the accident lead you to ask additional relevant questions. Some additional questions are listed below based on the type of accident.

After collecting the facts, you need to draw conclusions as to why the accident happened, and what can be done to prevent this or similar accidents from happening in the future. On the Supervisor Accident Investigation Report describe what you determine is the primary cause of the accident and classify into one of the following categories.

- Unsafe Condition – an identifiable hazard
- Inattentive – distracted or not paying attention
- Repetitive Motion – an activity performed over and over
- Unsafe Act – not following established work practices
- Other – describe

Next, identify how to prevent similar accidents, Corrective actions could be fixing an unsafe condition, additional training, increased supervision, and change in work methods. The Supervisor Accident Investigation Report asks three specific questions:

- Is additional training/coaching needed?
- Do established work procedures need to be changed?
- Is a work order needed to correct a hazard?

Act on the corrective actions identified as soon as you can. Remember that the corrective action may apply to more than a particular circumstance or employee. What other areas may present the same hazard? Do other employees need to change their work procedures?

You should discuss the results of your investigation with the employee. Be sure to tell the employee how you think the accident could have been avoided and how you expect the employee to manage similar tasks in the future. Remind the employee that it is her/his responsibility to work safely and report any unsafe conditions. You need to make sure you are supporting (e.g., supplying necessary equipment, having reasonable expectations of how long a job takes, supplying help when necessary, and diligent supervision) and rewarding safe working habits.

If you would like help investigating an accident, email or call Nancy Apple in Environmental Health and Safety (napple, ext. 6620) for assistance.

Additional Questions

Listed below are examples of additional questions to ask when investigating an accident and completing the Supervisor Accident Investigation Report grouped by the nature of the accident.

Slip/trip/fall

Was weather a contributing factor? If so, what kind of weather conditions existed at the time of the accident? If the person slipped and fell in a building, was the floor wet from people tracking in water from outside, for example? For a solution to this common problem, should a floor mat be provided for this location? Were there objects in the way that obstructed the path? If so, what were they and why were they there? What kind of footwear was being worn?

What time of day did the accident occur? Was it at the middle of the shift, the end, the beginning? Was the person's mental/physical state at the time a factor? Was the person tired, rushing, or not being careful? Was this a factor?

Was the person carrying anything at the time of the accident? Did this contribute to the person being off balance?

What were the conditions (aside from weather) at the time of the incident? What were the lighting conditions at the time? Could the individual see where they were walking? Could the hazard have been identified before the person slipped and fell?

Lifting/carrying/moving/ pulling/shoving

If a lifting injury occurs, what was the person lifting? How was the person lifting? Where was the object when it was being lifted? How heavy was the object? Was it a difficult shape to lift? If the object was too heavy, did the person test-lift the object first to see if it was too heavy and would require two people to lift? Why weren't two people sent to lift the object? Had the person been instructed *not* to lift the object, and if so, why did the person do it anyway? Had the person ever attended a back care/lifting program? Had one ever been offered? Is one needed?

Moving objects, carrying them, or getting them to move can be trouble. Lifting is only one aspect of objects in motion. When carrying trash, how was the trash being transported? If a hand injury occurred, was the person wearing gloves? Does a person push or pull a trashcan on wheels? Pushing is better than pulling. Pulling forces the person to place his/her body in awkward positions. Was the pathway clear? Were there ramps or other obstructions that may have played a role in the incident? Did the person open doors in anticipation of the move? Was the object too big to be moved safely? Could the object's size be altered to be more manageable? Should the load have been carried in two trips? Were weather conditions a factor?

What kind of footwear was being worn? Was improper footwear a contributing factor? Should a different type of shoe be worn for the type of work being performed? Was there adequate ankle support being provided by the shoe?

Cuts/bruises/punctures

What was the object that caused the cut/bruise? Was proper care and technique being exercised during use? Was the person's attention diverted from the job? Was the proper tool being used? If not, why not? Has the person been instructed in its use? Does the person have to do this type of activity often? Should gloves have been provided? If they were available, why were they not being used?

Was the person struck by an object, or did the person bump into an object? Was the person in tight quarters, a bathroom stall for example? Was the object known to be there? Was the person not paying attention to the job and the hazards of being in a tight space? Did something fall off of a shelf and strike the person? Should a ladder have been used to retrieve an object? Was one available? Is storage a problem in the area? Were tools being used which may have contributed to the injury? Was the condition of the tools being used a factor?

Miscellaneous

With eye injuries, was there a reasonable expectation that a splash might occur or particles could enter the eye? What entered the eye? Was the injury the result of a routine activity or an unusual event? Were glasses or goggles being worn, or available? Were employees required or encouraged to use them?

With chemical contamination to other parts of the body, such as a splash to the arm or dermatitis, what protective equipment was being worn? What equipment was available? Was the employee following established procedures for using the chemical?

Muscle strains occur for a variety of reasons. Poor posture may be one, while over-exertion may be another. What was the person doing when the strain occurred? How was the person performing the task when the strain occurred? Was the person in a hurry? Was help available? Was the task too much for one person to perform?

When equipment is involved, was the equipment broken? If so, was the condition known before the accident? Had the equipment been taken out of service? Was the employee following established procedures for use of the equipment?

See: [Supervisor Accident Investigation Report Form](#) [PDF]