

Why Your Organization Needs a Near-Miss Management System

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Near-miss reporting in risk management can act as a valuable solution to prevent future accidents, but a few critical processes should be included for any benefits to be realized.

What is a Near Miss?

Whether you call it a close call, narrow escape, near collision, or a near hit, they are all near misses or unplanned events that did not result in injury, illness, or damage, but had the potential to do so. A simple change of events or break in the chain prevented either an injury, fatality, or property damage. Most safety programs put an emphasis on reporting injuries and property damage, these are incidents that have already happened. Near miss reporting can often be a glimpse into the future and provide an opportunity to implement a solution to prevent an injury from occurring.

“Near miss reporting is important as these are great learning opportunities to fix a hazard in the workplace before something occurs,” says Sara Gibson, Senior Risk Manager at Safety National. “However, the systems used for investigating and reporting these incidents need to be actively used, and many organizations are running into obstacles that prevent them from prioritizing these near-miss management systems (NMMS).”

A recent study found that a lack of near miss engagement is linked to employees not understanding what events should be reported and low awareness of near miss reporting due to lack of training. Near miss incidents should be assessed to determine causes, potential for harm, and future prevention. Both unsafe conditions and unsafe behaviors can increase the possibility of an incident. The primary difference is how close the events are to becoming an incident.

What the process should include:

- **Reporting and Collecting** – This critical first step is often missed due to poor safety culture, a fear of reporting, and a lack of employee engagement. This process can be simplified with electronic reporting.
- **Cause Assessment** – This is often not prioritized because an injury has not occurred. Implementing standard root cause analysis or other incident identification processes can help engage stakeholders.
- **Solution Identification** – All affected employees should be involved in identifying a

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solution to apply corrective actions and prevent it from happening again.

- **Prevention Communication** – Discussions should be positive, and individuals should be recognized for identifying and preventing an incident from occurring.

Every near-miss is a call for action. Sometimes, it is easily fixed; other times, it will need special attention and a planned correction. In either case, a near miss should never be ignored. All near-misses must be reported and investigated so the next incident does not result in an injury or worse.

Be sure near miss reporting is part of your overall reporting program. The next time you hear an employee say, “That really could have gotten someone hurt”, have a conversation about near miss reporting and the importance it plays in workplace safety.