

Tool Box Talk

NEAR MISS ACCIDENT THEORY

SEPTEMBER 2014

A near miss is an event or hazard that does not result in injury, illness or damage, but had the potential to do so. Near misses must be reported, regardless of how severe, in order to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to prevent a recurrence in which serious injury or loss may occur.

Near misses happen in the construction industry on a regular basis. We can recognize near misses, and use them as a tool to change processes and prevent future incidents and serious injuries from happening. With proper reporting and investigation, these incidents should never reoccur.

Examples of a Near Miss

- A worker not wearing the proper PPE for the job
- A worker not following proper procedures or safe work practices
- A person slips on ice, but does not fall or hurt themselves
- Tool malfunctions or misuse
- A tool that is dropped and lands beside another person
- A missing guard rail and a person nearly slips into the opening
- Using the top of the step ladder as a step
- Equipment nearly contacting overhead power lines
- Nearly hitting underground utilities or lines

Accident Theory

Many safety practices are reactive and not proactive as they tend to happen after a near miss or loss has already occurred. We must be proactive in our approach to safety and help protect our most important assets: our employees.

There is a theory suggesting there is a ratio between the number of serious accidents compared to the number of near misses or close calls. This is called the **Accident Pyramid**.



In essence what the triangle portrays is that for every 600 near misses there are typically 30 property losses, 10 lost time accidents and one major accident. The top three levels are part of the reactive process of an accident where it is too late: damage has occurred and people are hurt.

Where focusing on the lowest level, the proactive process, it is an opportunity to make changes to a policy, procedure, practice, job task, habit, implement a new tool or PPE, or engineer a solution. Investigations of serious accidents often reveal earlier incidents of a similar nature that were dismissed.

Why Investigate a Near Miss?

Part of a successful safety management program is to ensure near misses are reported and investigated. Near misses and resulting inspections will help prevent an injury or even a fatality.

How can an investigation take place if the near misses are not being reported? It is everyone's responsibility to report near misses. This way everyone gets to go home safe at the end of the day.

Implement a simple Near Miss Report like the SCSA sample available at www.scsaonline.ca/topmenuresources.

Discuss the near miss reports and findings each day in regularly scheduled meetings with employees from each shift. This is where you can obtain additional ideas or corrective actions: from the people that perform the work everyday.

Be proactive, conduct a risk assessment, think about your work, inspect your area, tidy up and report unsafe acts conditions and near misses.

Just Think: What if your employees reported five near misses this week, and then through your investigation, your team discovers three positive changes for each near miss. Through these investigations you are able to make 15 positive changes prior to damage occurring or anyone getting hurt.

The form is titled 'NEAR MISS/CLOSE CALL INCIDENT REPORT'. It includes fields for Location/Date, Date/Time, and a description of the incident. It has a section for 'Contributing Causes' with checkboxes for Planning Process, Environmental Conditions, PPE, etc. There is also a section for 'Immediate Action(s)' and 'Who was Involved?'. At the bottom, it features the SCSA logo and a section titled 'What is a Near Miss?' with a definition and a list of 'Types of Hazard Controls'.



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