

# **Town of Amherst Incident Investigation Policy**

## ***Purpose***

Learning from previous incidents is a key element in the prevention of future incidents. This policy addresses the procedures to be followed for all incidents or near misses resulting in employee injury or property damage.

## ***General***

The Town of Amherst will ensure that jobs having a potential for employee injury within its facility(s) are evaluated and controlled. The Town of Amherst shall make available to employees required types of personal protective equipment (PPE), engineering controls and procedures suitable for the work to be performed. No unprotected person shall knowingly be subjected to a hazardous work condition.

## ***Responsibilities***

All employees reporting potential or known hazards should use the Supervisor's Incident Investigation report form (attached). The following procedures apply:

## **Management**

- Will support incident prevention and incident investigation training for supervisors.
- Ensure all incidents and injuries are investigated and reported to the appropriate parties.
- Ensure immediate and long-term corrective actions are taken to prevent re-occurrence.
- Maintain incident report files.
- Provide all necessary medical care for injured workers.

## **Supervisor**

The supervisor is the person who must take the incident situation under control and immediately eliminate or control hazards to others. Since direct supervisors are familiar with employee's work environment and assigned tasks, in most cases the supervisor will conduct the investigation.

## **Employees**

- Immediately report all incidents to their supervisor.
- Assist as requested in all incident investigations.
- Report all hazardous conditions and near misses.

## ***Investigative Procedures***

The actual procedures used in a particular investigation depend on the nature and results of the incident. Incident investigation is primarily a fact-finding procedure; the facts revealed are used to prevent recurrences of similar incidents. The focus of incident investigation will be to prevent future incidents and injuries to increase the safety and health of all employees.

## **Immediate Steps:**

1. Provide first aid for any injured persons.
2. Eliminate or control hazards.
3. Document incident scene information.

4. Interview witnesses immediately.

The investigator should use the following steps:

1. Gather preliminary information, including:
  - a. Description of the incident, with damage estimates.
  - b. Normal operating procedures.
  - c. Location of the incident site.
  - d. List of witnesses.
  - e. Events that preceded the incident.
2. Visit the incident site to get updated information.
3. Inspect the incident site.
  - a. Secure the area. Do not disturb the scene unless a hazard exists.
  - b. Prepare the necessary sketches and photographs. Label each carefully and keep accurate records.
4. Interview each victim and witness. Also interview those who were present before the incident and those who arrived at the site shortly after the incident. Keep accurate records of each interview.
5. Determine
  - a. What was not normal before the incident?
  - b. Where the abnormality occurred.
  - c. When it was first noted.
  - d. How it occurred.
6. Analyze the data obtained in step 5. Repeat any of the prior steps, if necessary.
7. Determine
  - a. Why the incident occurred.
  - b. A likely sequence of events and probable causes (direct, indirect, basic).
  - c. Alternative sequences.
8. Check each sequence against the data from step 5.
9. Determine the most likely sequence of events and the most probable causes.
10. Conduct a post-investigation briefing.
11. Prepare a summary report, including the recommended actions to prevent a recurrence. A completed incident investigation report shall be prepared and submitted to management as appropriate.

An investigation is not complete until all data is analyzed and a final report is completed. In practice, the investigative work, data analysis and report preparation proceeds simultaneously over much of the time spent on the investigation.

### ***Fact-Finding***

Gather evidence from many sources during an investigation. Get information from witnesses and reports as well as by observation. Interview witnesses as soon as possible after an incident. Inspect the incident site before any changes occur. Take photographs and make sketches of the incident scene. Get copies of all reports. Documents containing normal operating procedures, flow diagrams, maintenance charts, or reports of difficulties or abnormalities are particularly

useful. Keep complete and accurate notes. Record pre-incident conditions, the incident sequence and post-incident conditions. In addition, document the location of victims, witnesses, machinery, energy sources and hazardous materials.

### ***Possible Causes***

Obvious incident causes are most probably symptoms of a "root cause" problem. Some examples of Unsafe Acts and Unsafe Conditions, which may lead to accidents, are:

#### **Unsafe Acts**

- Administrative activities (Inadequate training, policies, or staffing)
- Unauthorized operation of equipment
- Running - horse play not following procedures, by-passing safety devices
- Failure to use proper protective equipment
- Under influence of drugs or alcohol

#### **Unsafe Conditions**

- Ergonomic hazards
- Environmental hazards, inadequate housekeeping, blocked walkways
- Improper or damaged personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Inadequate machine guarding