

Accident Investigation

The investigation and analysis of work-related accidents and incidents forms an essential part of managing health and safety. Health and safety investigations provide an organisation with a deeper understanding of the risks associated with its work activities. Well-thought-out risk control measures, combined with adequate supervision, monitoring and effective management (i.e. a risk-management system) will ensure that the organisation's work activities are safe. Health and safety investigations are an important tool in developing and refining a risk-management system.



THE Applus+ SOLUTION

The Applus+ accident-investigation service is structured around the following activities:

Information gathering, which must:

- Be timely
- Be structured, setting out clearly what is known and what is not known and recording the investigative process

Analysis, which must:

- Be objective and unbiased
- Identify the sequence of events and conditions that led up to the adverse event
- Identify the immediate causes
- Identify the underlying causes – in other words, past actions that have allowed or led unsafe conditions/practices to go undetected

- Identify the root causes – in other words, organisational and management HandS arrangements (supervision, monitoring, training, resources allocated to HandS, etc)

Risk-control measures:

- Identify the risk-control measures that were missing, inadequate or not applied.
- Compare conditions/practices as they were with those required by current legislation, codes of practice and guidelines
- Identify any additional measures needed to address the immediate, underlying and root causes of the incident/accident
- Provide meaningful recommendations that can be implemented.

Action plan and implementation:

- Develop an action plan with SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Timescaled)
- Ensure that the action plan deals effectively not only with the immediate and underlying causes but also the root causes
- Include lessons that may be applied to prevent other adverse events
- Provide feedback to all parties involved to ensure the findings and recommendations are correct, address the issues and are realistic
- Communicate the results of the investigation and the action plan to everyone who needs to know
- Include arrangements to ensure the action plan is implemented and progress monitored

Target customers

The urgency of an investigation will depend on the magnitude and immediacy of the risk involved (for example, a major accident involving an everyday job will need to be investigated quickly).

In general, adverse events (incidents and accidents) should be investigated and analysed as soon as possible. This is not simply good practice; it is common sense – memory is best and motivation greatest immediately after an adverse event.

Key customer benefits

Benefits of an accident investigation include:

- The prevention of further similar adverse events. If there is a serious accident, the regulatory authorities will take a firm line if an organisation has ignored previous warnings
- The prevention of business losses due to disruption, stoppage, lost orders and the costs of criminal and civil legal actions
- An improvement in employee morale and attitudes towards health and safety
- Greater employee cooperation in implementing new safety precautions if they were involved in the decision and they can see that problems are dealt with
- The development of managerial skills which can be readily applied to other areas of the organisation