

Accident Investigation

Injury Review Process

INJURY REVIEW PROCESS

An Injury Review Program is one of the most effective approaches to reducing employee injuries and Workers' Compensation costs.

FORMAT

The Injury Review Process is simple to administer. On a regular basis, a committee of upper and middle management meets for approximately one hour.

During this time three or four injured employees are individually scheduled to describe their particular injury in detail to the committee. The management team may interject by asking the employee to elaborate on specific circumstances. Once everyone is satisfied with the discussion of the incident, the injured employee is asked how he or she thinks the company and employees can prevent similar injuries from recurring.

BENEFITS

The positive benefits and effects of the Injury Review Process (IRP) are many:

1. It is a follow-up investigation of prior accidents and injuries. Many times this process has proven to be far more revealing and in-depth than initial accident investigations.
2. During this process a team comprised of management and workers is considering and developing ways to prevent recurrence of injuries.
3. The injured employee realizes that management considers safety and accident prevention to be a priority. The IRP creates a high level of safety consciousness with the injured worker, as well as with all other employees.
4. Safety psychology tells us that when an employee is injured, he or she become more or less prone to future injuries, depending upon how the employee has been treated by those in authority.

During the IRP the employee is assured that the committee is reviewing the injury because the company is concerned about its employees' well being and safety. He or she is also assured that no disciplinary action will be taken as a result of this process, and that the purpose is to create a safer work environment for employees. This humanistic concern for injured employees has proven to have an effect on preventing recurrence of injuries.

5. It imposes a degree of accountability on supervisors for accident prevention. Supervisors will become more involved in safety to avoid having their workers called in front of the committee.
6. This process will prevent “rip-offs” of the Workers’ Compensation system. The fact that faked injuries will have to be explained in detail is an effective deterrent.
7. The injured employee is made to feel that top management is sincerely interested in his or her ideas about solving a problem.
8. The IRP will eventually decrease the frequency and severity of injuries through corrective action and increased safety consciousness.

SUGGESTED PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Meet monthly or on a regular basis, as needed.
- Review three or four injuries at each meeting.
- Spend ten or fifteen minutes reviewing each injury.
- Select and review lost time injuries, back injuries, near misses and minor injuries that could have been serious.
- Have your supervisors individually accompany their injured workers. Make sure employee describes the injury, not the supervisor.
- If you are in a union situation, it is advisable to have one or two representatives on the committee.
- Before your first meeting, send a memo to all employees announcing the process.
- Notify the employee well in advance that his or her injury has been selected for review. Employees who are off work on lost-time injuries should not be excluded from this process.
- Prior to the review, committee members should be given copies of the First Reports of Injury and Accident Investigation Reports.
- Be extremely positive with each employee. Put the employee at ease -- explain that the purpose of the IRP is to understand how the injury occurred and to prevent this type of injury from recurring. Ask how the employee is feeling, whether the injury is healed and whether proper medical care was received.

- Do not reprimand anyone through this process. If an employee was injured due to non-compliance with safety rules, a reprimand should be given the day of the injury and not during this meeting.
- Be sure to thank the employee for his or her help and input.
- Following each IRP, a memo should be circulated describing each incident and the corrective action. DO NOT MENTION INJURED EMPLOYEES' NAMES. The progress of this correction action should be reviewed in future meetings.