

TOOLBOX TALK

Near Miss Reporting

WHY THIS MATTERS

For every 1 serious injury, there are 29 minor injuries and 300 near misses (Heinrich's Law, based on 75,000+ accident reports). Near misses are free warnings — they show you exactly where the next injury will happen. Reporting them is the most powerful prevention tool.

300

Near misses for every 1 serious injury

88%

Of accidents caused by unsafe acts (Heinrich)

100%

Near miss reporting prevents serious injuries

5 Rules for Effective Near Miss Reporting

Every near miss is a future accident waiting to happen — report it now:

1

REPORT EVERY NEAR MISS IMMEDIATELY

If something almost caused injury or damage, report it right away. Don't wait. Don't assume someone else will.

2

NO BLAME — REPORTING IS POSITIVE

Near miss reports are about fixing hazards, not blaming people. A reporting culture saves lives.

3

DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED CLEARLY

What happened? Where? When? What could have gone wrong? The more detail, the better the fix.

4

INVESTIGATE AND FIND THE ROOT CAUSE

Don't stop at "worker error." Ask why 5 times. Find the system failure — that's what you fix.

5

TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION AND FOLLOW UP

Identify the fix, assign responsibility, set a deadline, and verify it's done. No report should end without action.

Near Miss Reporting Checklist

- Does your site have an easy-to-use near miss reporting system?
- Are workers trained to recognize and report near misses?
- Is there a no-blame policy for near miss reporting?
- Are reported near misses investigated and corrective actions taken?
- Are near miss trends shared with all workers regularly?

Common Near Misses on Construction Sites

Object nearly fell on someone

Unsecured tool, material, or debris fell but missed. Next time it won't miss. Secure everything now.

Worker almost fell

Slipped, tripped, or lost balance near an edge. Investigate the surface, lighting, and fall protection.

Equipment near-contact

Vehicle or machine came close to a worker. Review traffic plans, spotters, and exclusion zones.

Electrical near-contact

Tool or equipment came close to a live line. Verify clearance distances and locate all utilities.

Scaffold/Ladder issue

Component was loose, damaged, or missing. Inspect and repair before anyone else uses it.

Chemical spill/exposure

Small spill or brief exposure that didn't cause injury. Review handling procedures and containment.

Common Mistakes That Prevent Reporting

- ✗ "Nothing happened, so why report it?" — the NEXT time, something will happen
- ✗ Fear of blame or punishment — a blame culture kills reporting and costs lives
- ✗ "I'm too busy right now" — reporting takes 2 minutes, recovering from injury takes months
- ✗ Thinking near misses are "normal" — normalizing danger is how serious accidents happen
- ✗ Management not acting on reports — when nothing changes, workers stop reporting

Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ A near miss is a gift — it shows you the hazard before someone gets hurt. Don't waste it
- ✓ More reports = safer site — high near miss reporting means workers are engaged and vigilant
- ✓ Report the hazard, not the person — focus on fixing the condition, not assigning blame
- ✓ Every investigation should end with an action — a report without a fix is just paper
- ✓ Share lessons learned — when a near miss is reported and fixed, tell the whole crew. That's how culture changes

Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Has anyone had a near miss this week that wasn't reported?
2. Do you feel comfortable reporting near misses without fear of blame?
3. What makes it hard to report near misses on our site?
4. Can you name three hazards that could cause a near miss today?
5. What was the last corrective action taken from a near miss report?

TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: _____ Supervisor: _____

Project: _____ Location: _____