

TOOLBOX TALK

Reporting Minor Injuries

WHY THIS MATTERS

Heinrich's Law (1:29:300) shows that for every major injury, there are 29 minor injuries and 300 near-misses. Research shows over 50% of workplace injuries go unreported. A small cut today can become tomorrow's infection, amputation, or fatality.

1:29

For every major injury,
29 minor ones (Heinrich)

50%+

Of workplace injuries
go unreported (PMC research)

2.5M

Nonfatal injuries
reported in 2024 (BLS)

5 Rules for Reporting Minor Injuries

Every worker must report all injuries — no matter how small they seem:

1**REPORT EVERY INJURY IMMEDIATELY**

Report all cuts, scrapes, bruises, strains, splinters, and eye irritations to your supervisor right away. No injury is 'too small' to report — even first-aid-only cases matter.

2**DOCUMENT IT IN WRITING**

Complete an incident report form with date, time, location, what happened, body part affected, and witnesses. Written records protect you and help prevent future injuries.

3**GET FIRST AID RIGHT AWAY**

Clean and treat every wound immediately, no matter how minor. An untreated cut can become infected within hours. Know where the first aid kit is located on your site.

4**NEVER HIDE AN INJURY**

OSHA prohibits employers from retaliating against workers who report injuries (29 CFR 1904.35). Hiding an injury puts your health at risk and removes the chance to fix the hazard.

5**FOLLOW UP ON TREATMENT**

Monitor your injury for signs of infection, worsening pain, or limited movement. Seek medical attention if a 'minor' injury gets worse. Report any changes to your supervisor.

After Any Injury — Quick Checklist

- Has the injury been reported to your supervisor?
- Has first aid been administered immediately?
- Has an incident report form been completed?
- Have witnesses been identified and documented?
- Has the area been checked for the hazard that caused it?
- Do you know the signs of infection or worsening?

Why Workers Don't Report — And Why They Must

'Too small': No injury is too small. A minor scrape can lead to infection, cellulitis, or sepsis. A 'tweaked' back can become a herniated disc.

Fear: OSHA protects you — employers cannot retaliate for reporting injuries. Retaliation is a separate OSHA violation (29 CFR 1904.35).

Peer pressure: A tough culture that discourages reporting is a dangerous culture. Real toughness is speaking up to protect yourself and others.

Paperwork: A 5-minute report today can prevent weeks of lost time tomorrow. Documentation also protects your workers' comp rights.

'I'll deal with it': Self-treatment without reporting hides hazards from your employer. The same hazard that hurt you will hurt the next worker.

Time pressure: Taking 10 minutes to report now saves days of recovery later. Your health is more valuable than any deadline.

Common Mistakes That Make Minor Injuries Serious

- ✗ Not cleaning a cut properly — untreated wounds can become infected within 6-8 hours
- ✗ Ignoring a 'minor' strain and continuing heavy work — small strains become chronic injuries
- ✗ Waiting until the end of the shift to report — delayed reporting makes claims harder to verify
- ✗ Not documenting witnesses — without witnesses, proving a work-related injury becomes difficult
- ✗ Removing a splinter without cleaning the wound — embedded debris causes infections and abscesses

Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Report first, then get treatment — verbal notification to your supervisor takes 30 seconds
- ✓ Know the location of every first aid kit on your site — seconds matter for wound treatment
- ✓ Take photos of the injury and the hazard that caused it — visual evidence supports your report
- ✓ Watch for infection signs: redness, swelling, warmth, red streaks, fever — seek medical care immediately
- ✓ Every reported near-miss prevents the next injury — reporting protects the entire crew

Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Has anyone had a 'minor' injury that became serious later?
2. Do you feel comfortable reporting all injuries on this site?
3. Where are the first aid kits located in our work area?
4. What is our process for completing an incident report?
5. How can we improve our reporting culture as a team?

TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

Project: _____

Location: _____

Attendance sheet attached: [] Yes