



# TAILGATE SAFETY

## ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS – WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHY, WHERE, HOW?

An accident is an unplanned event. It may or may not involve property damage and/or injuries. Studies show that approximately 85% of accidents are caused by an unsafe act, the other 15% by unsafe conditions.

Accident investigation plays an important role in determining the true cause or causes of an injury, property damage, or a near-miss. Once the cause(s) are identified then we can make changes to procedures and correct hazards to prevent future injuries or property damage of a similar nature.

We will be conducting an accident investigation for near-misses, accidents involving injuries and/or property damage. Some will be more in depth than others, depending on the situation.

What we need from you is 1) to report all accidents or near-misses immediately, and 2) cooperate with the investigation. Remember, we are not trying to point fingers or find someone to “blame”, we are trying to assess what happened so we can figure out what to do to prevent it from happening again.

A good accident investigation is aimed at determining the hazards that led to the accident and any other related hazards that could lead to accidents in the future. We ask what happened? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Who was involved? How did it happen? Hopefully, the answers will lead to why it happened and how we can keep it from happening again.

Part of the fact gathering will include talking to witnesses and the injured person. No matter who reports an incident or how serious it was, if it involved you or a task you perform, we need your help. As a witness, we will need clear, objective answers to our questions. As a person who may perform the same task or use the same materials or equipment that were involved in an incident – we need your input and experience. Think about and offer suggestions as to what changes could be made to reduce or eliminate a repeat of the same or a similar incident. Please don't be afraid to tell us, we want to know.

Once the questioning portion is complete, we take all the information and determine causes -- lack of training, inexperience, production pressures, choices made, lack of disciplinary action for previous safety violations, inappropriate procedures in place, etc. can all be accident causes. Generally “carelessness” is a symptom, not a cause. Once the cause or causes are identified then we have to figure out how to address them.

Once again, when it comes to correcting the hazards, our best resource is the people who know the job and the equipment the best – you. If you notice a problem in the course of your work, please report it to me along with suggestions for improvement.

Together we can make our workplace safer!!

**Training Tips:** 1) Have your company accident investigation forms available for review. 2) Allow employees to discuss past accidents and how an investigation process could have helped. 3) Ask questions such as “why is it important to report a near miss?” or “can you think of any areas where we've had a pattern of near-misses or accidents?”

