

**University of Arkansas at Fayetteville  
Office of Environmental Health and Safety**

**Procedure Name: Accident / Unsafe Condition Investigation**

**Procedure Number: 600.1**

**Effective Date: 3-1-2016**

**Procedure:**

All accidents and unsafe conditions should be documented and investigated. The depth and complexity of the investigation will vary with the circumstances and seriousness of the accident. The Supervisor or other individual responsible for operations involved in an accident should ensure that an investigation is conducted and that when appropriate, corrective actions are taken.

**Purpose:**

Accidents occur when hazards or unsafe conditions are ignored; when they escape detection during preventive measures, such as a job safety analysis; when hazards are not obvious; or as the result of a combination of circumstances that were difficult to foresee. A thorough accident investigation may identify previously overlooked physical, environmental, or process hazards, the need for new or more extensive safety training, or unsafe work practices. The primary focus of any accident investigation should be the determination of the facts surrounding the incident and the lessons learned to prevent future similar occurrences.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

**Supervisors / Department Heads**

- Ensure accidents or unsafe conditions involving their operations or workers are investigated promptly and thoroughly.
- Complete and submit Online Accident, Incident, or Unsafe Condition Report.
- Take corrective actions.

**Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S)**

- Assist supervisors with investigations when requested.
- Provide training for corrective action and accident prevention

**Individual**

- Cooperate with supervisors and others during investigations.

## **Scope and Application:**

The first priority whenever an accident occurs is to ensure that any injuries receive prompt medical attention. The accident investigation should begin immediately thereafter. This ensures that details of what occurred will be fresh in people's minds and that witnesses do not influence one another by talking about the accident. It also minimizes the likelihood that important evidence is not moved, lost, or destroyed before the scene has been thoroughly inspected.

Accidents fall into two categories, serious and non-serious. Non-serious accidents do not cause lost workdays and include such things as minor cuts or abrasions, or system failures that have minor consequences. Serious accidents involve lost workdays and more serious injuries, and also include "near misses." An example of a near miss would be: A worker twists an ankle in a fall from a low scaffold (this could easily have been a broken leg or worse).

After an accident or near miss occurs, supervisors should determine what level of investigation is needed. All serious accidents, those involving lost workdays or near misses, should be investigated with the same thoroughness.

## **Who Should Investigate:**

Supervisors should make their own initial investigation of all accidents. When circumstances warrant (e.g. complex technical issues, chemical exposures, serious injury or death) a more comprehensive investigation may involve other departmental staff, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), or other University agencies. Regardless of the type of investigation, the supervisor should be involved for the following reasons:

- Supervisors have a responsibilities to provide their workers with a safe and healthful workplace.
- Supervisors know the workers and their work better than anyone else and are in the best position to gather facts and find a practical solution to the problem.
- The supervisor's accident investigation can help promote better relations with workers by demonstrating concern for their safety and attention to accident prevention.

## **How to Investigate:**

As with most other tasks, skill in conducting effective accident investigations improves with experience. A good basic approach is to find the cause of the accident and determine what can be done to prevent the same or similar accident from occurring. Some suggestions that may help supervisors get the facts and reach a conclusion include:

- Maintain objectivity throughout the investigation. Its purpose is to find the cause of the accident, not to assign blame for its occurrence.
- Inspect the accident site and circumstances thoroughly before anything is changed. Take photos if possible.
- Discuss the accident with the injured person, but only after first aid or medical treatment has been given. Also talk with anyone who witnessed the accident and those familiar with conditions immediately before and after it occurred.

- Be thorough. Small details may point to the real cause.
- Reconstruct the events that resulted in the accident. Determine unsafe conditions or actions that were contributing factors. If help is needed in determining the cause feel free to ask for it. EH&S can provide assistance when needed.

### **Accident or Unsafe Condition Reporting**

Any accident or unsafe condition occurring on any University of Arkansas Fayetteville facility shall be reported to the Office of Environmental Health & Safety (575-5448) or Campus Safety Officer at (575-2909) during the hours of 7:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday thru Friday. If the incident occurs after normal hours notify the University of Arkansas Police at (575-2222). As part of the investigation process the “**Accident, Incident, or Unsafe Condition Report**” should be completed and submitted. This form is located on the Environmental Health & Safety website ([ehs.uark.edu](http://ehs.uark.edu)) under the heading of emergency procedures.

### **Investigation Results:**

Once the conditions that caused the accident have been conclusively identified, the department heads, supervisors, or their designated representatives should take action to control or eliminate them. EH&S can provide assistance in determining the level of action that may be necessary such as the following:

- When equipment changes or safeguards are necessary, supervisors should discuss specific recommendations with Department management.
- When an operation can be changed to eliminate the hazard, supervisors should make the change if it is within their authority, or seek the necessary approval from department management.
- If unsafe acts by workers are involved, ensure that the worker is properly trained and that reference procedures are followed. Procedures should be updated as needed and training should follow the related procedure.

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Source: Environmental Health and Safety

Revised:

Approved By: MKL

Custodian: EHS