

Incident Reporting & Investigation Policy

For Australian Small & Medium Enterprises

Template Version 1.0 | December 2024

Important Notice

This template is provided as a general guide only and should be customised to your specific workplace. Certain incidents must be notified to the WHS regulator. We recommend reviewing the notification requirements for your state or territory.

1. Purpose

This policy establishes the requirements for reporting and investigating workplace incidents at [Company Name]. Effective incident reporting and investigation helps us prevent similar incidents, meet legal obligations, and continuously improve our safety performance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, contractors, and visitors
- All workplaces and work activities
- All types of incidents, including injuries, illnesses, near misses, and property damage

3. Definitions

3.1 Incident

An unplanned event that results in, or has the potential to result in, injury, illness, damage, or other loss.

3.2 Near Miss

An incident that did not result in injury, illness, or damage but had the potential to do so.

3.3 Notifiable Incident

Under WHS legislation, a notifiable incident is:

- The death of a person
- A serious injury or illness
- A dangerous incident

Notifiable incidents must be reported to the WHS regulator immediately.

3.4 Serious Injury or Illness

Includes (but is not limited to):

- Immediate treatment as an in-patient in hospital
- Amputation of any body part
- Serious head injury
- Serious eye injury
- Serious burn
- Spinal injury
- Loss of bodily function
- Medical treatment within 48 hours of exposure to a substance

3.5 Dangerous Incident

An incident that exposes any person to serious risk, even if no injury occurred. Examples include:

- Uncontrolled escape, spillage, or leakage of a substance
- Uncontrolled implosion, explosion, or fire
- Uncontrolled escape of gas or steam
- Electric shock
- Fall or release of anything from height
- Collapse or failure of excavation, structure, or equipment

4. What Must Be Reported

The following must be reported:

- All work-related injuries and illnesses (no matter how minor)
- Near misses
- Property or equipment damage
- Dangerous occurrences
- Environmental incidents
- Security incidents

Reporting near misses and minor incidents is critical – they provide valuable information to prevent serious incidents.

5. Reporting Procedures

5.1 Immediate Actions

When an incident occurs:

- Ensure the safety of all persons – remove from danger if safe to do so
- Provide first aid and call emergency services if required

- Notify your supervisor immediately
- Preserve the incident scene where practicable (for investigation)
- Do not disturb the scene of a notifiable incident except for safety or emergency reasons

5.2 Reporting Timeframes

Incidents must be reported:

- Verbally – immediately or as soon as practicable
- In writing – within 24 hours using the incident report form
- Notifiable incidents – immediately to management and the WHS regulator

5.3 How to Report

- Verbally notify your supervisor
- Complete an incident report form (available from [location/system])
- Provide as much detail as possible
- Submit the form to [Manager/Safety Officer]

5.4 Information Required

Incident reports should include:

- Date, time, and location of incident
- Name(s) of person(s) involved
- Name(s) of witnesses
- Description of what happened
- Nature and extent of injury/illness/damage
- Immediate actions taken
- Potential causes or contributing factors

6. Notifiable Incidents

For notifiable incidents, [Company Name] must:

- Notify the WHS regulator immediately (by phone)
- Preserve the incident site until an inspector arrives or directs otherwise
- Keep records of the incident for at least 5 years

The [Manager/Safety Officer] is responsible for notifying the regulator.

Regulator contact: [Insert state/territory WHS regulator contact details]

7. Investigation

7.1 Purpose of Investigation

Investigations are conducted to:

- Identify causes and contributing factors
- Determine corrective and preventive actions
- Prevent recurrence
- Meet legal obligations
- Identify systemic issues

7.2 When to Investigate

All reported incidents will be reviewed. The level of investigation depends on:

- Severity of actual or potential consequences
- Likelihood of recurrence
- Regulatory requirements

Serious incidents require detailed investigation. Near misses and minor incidents may require a basic investigation.

7.3 Who Investigates

- Minor incidents – Supervisor
- Moderate incidents – Supervisor with support from Safety Officer
- Serious incidents – Investigation team (may include external expertise)
- Investigations involve consultation with affected workers and HSRs

7.4 Investigation Process

The investigation process includes:

- Secure the scene and preserve evidence
- Gather information (interviews, documents, physical evidence)
- Analyse information to identify causes
- Identify root causes (not just immediate causes)
- Develop corrective and preventive actions
- Assign responsibility and timeframes
- Document findings and recommendations
- Implement and verify actions

7.5 Root Cause Analysis

Investigations should go beyond the immediate cause to identify underlying factors such as:

- Work environment
- Equipment or materials
- Work procedures

- Training and supervision
- Organisational factors

Tools such as "5 Whys" or fault tree analysis may be used.

8. Corrective Actions

Corrective actions must:

- Address the root cause(s) identified
- Follow the hierarchy of controls
- Be specific, measurable, and time-bound
- Be assigned to a responsible person
- Be tracked to completion
- Be verified for effectiveness

9. Records

[Company Name] will maintain records of:

- All incident reports
- Investigation findings and recommendations
- Corrective actions and their completion
- Notifications to regulators

Records are retained for at least 5 years (or longer as required by law).

10. Reporting to Management

[Company Name] will:

- Report incident statistics to management regularly
- Identify trends and systemic issues
- Track progress on corrective actions
- Use data to prioritise safety improvements

11. Responsibilities

11.1 Employees

- Report all incidents, injuries, and near misses immediately
- Cooperate with investigations
- Provide accurate information
- Implement corrective actions in their area

11.2 Supervisors

- Respond to incidents promptly
- Ensure incidents are reported and documented
- Participate in investigations
- Implement corrective actions
- Follow up with injured workers

11.3 Management

- Ensure reporting and investigation procedures are implemented
- Provide resources for investigations
- Review investigation findings
- Make decisions on corrective actions
- Notify regulators as required

12. No Retaliation

[Company Name] will not disadvantage any person for reporting an incident in good faith. We encourage reporting and value the information it provides.

13. Training

Training will be provided on:

- How and when to report incidents
- Completing incident report forms
- Investigation techniques (for those conducting investigations)
- Understanding notifiable incidents

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- At least annually
- Following significant incidents
- When legislation changes

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understood [Company Name]'s Incident Reporting & Investigation Policy. I understand my responsibility to report all incidents, injuries, and near misses.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____