

Guidance on Incident and Accident Investigation

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1. Introduction.

- 1.1 The main purpose of investigating incidents is to find the reason why harm was caused to pupils, staff, other people or resources such as property and equipment. This is in order to ensure that effective use is made of all resources to enable a cost effective service to be provided. The investigation should not be used to allocate blame, but to identify what went wrong and to prevent a similar incident happening again. Accidents are costly events, besides pain and sufferings there are costs arising from accident, such as human cost, lost of time from work, claim for injury, business disruption and clearers time, therapists time, investigation time, ambulance time, fire brigade, police and other hidden costs such as disruption to family and society.
- 1.2 Managers will ensure that all staff within their area of responsibility are aware of the Council's requirements for accident/incidents reporting and investigation and the use of appropriate forms. Union Safety Representatives should be involved. In the case of more serious incidents the Health and Safety Executive, or the Council's insurers may also become involved.

2. Definitions.

- 2.1 An "accident " is an unforeseen and unplanned event resulting in injury to persons or damage to property, equipment or plant.
- 2.2 For the purpose of these arrangements "incident" will mean any accident, verbal abuse, unsociable behaviours, near miss, work related disease or any injury during restraint.

3. Responsibilities:

- 3.1 Business unit managers /head teachers must ensure that:

- All incidents are investigated and any recommendations are implemented.

- Risk assessments associated with the activity under investigation are reviewed.
 - Staff are informed of any changes to work procedures.
- 3.2 Health and Safety Team will:
- Provide advice and assistance as required.
 - Report incident to the HSE if necessary.
- 3.3 Employees must:
- Co-operate with anybody undertaking an investigation.

4. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) involvement.

- 4.1 During any serious investigation there is a potential for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to become involved. Such intervention is most likely to be triggered by a reportable event being sent to the HSE on the approved pro-forma as described under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) (see the Councils incident reporting procedure for further guidance). The HSE may also become involved as a result of a complaint from another party, such as another enforcing authority (police, fire etc.) or as a result of a proactive monitoring.
- 4.2 If faced with the intervention of the HSE on any investigation immediately contact the Education Health and Safety Team who will advise you on further action required and provide any support needed.

5. Investigation process.

- 5.1 Investigations following a fatality, major injury or dangerous occurrence must be undertaken by a panel appointed by the Strategic Director discover the underlying and immediate causes of the accident and to produce recommendations to prevent a recurrence.
- 5.2 In any investigation into an incident it important not only to identify the immediate cause but also the underlying causes, together with any faults in management systems that allowed the causes to develop. Below are some of the most common causes of incidents:

Immediate causes	Unsafe acts	Horseplay Misuse (active) Ignorance (passive or habitual)
	Unsafe conditions	Poor housekeeping Damaged equipment Unsafe workplace/environment
Underlying causes	Job factors	Lack of experience Poor design Lack of or incorrect training
	Organisational factors	Lack of procedures Lack of inspection Lack of maintenance Lack of supervision
	Individual	Attitude Education/Training Motivation

- 5.3 Preparing for Investigation:** In order to make an investigation as easy as possible there are some issues that need to be clarified before the actual investigation starts:

- It is important to be clear on the purpose of the investigation, which is to identify ways to prevent a re-occurrence of the incident not to allocate blame. Do not approach the investigation with any preconceived ideas on the cause.
- Ensure that competent investigators are used especially with very complex cases.

5.4 Scope of the investigation: All incidents connected with or arising out of work should be investigated. Completion of the corporate incident accident form will require some investigative work in establishing and recording the following information;

- Who was injured/involved
- When it happened
- Type of injury
- What happened
- What preventative steps will be taken to prevent a reoccurrence

5.5 The duration of any investigation should be determined by the following factors;

- The severity of the incident.
- The complexity of the incident.
- Human costs of the incident.
- Costs to the Society/Community.
- Number of persons involved.
- Finding the cause of the incident.
- Business costs of the incident.

Example 1

A release of a toxic or noxious substance within a busy area is likely to result in a lengthy investigation. The incident may be severe with a potential for large numbers of people to be involved. There may be many causes of release and it is likely to take some time to interview persons involved and investigate the scene to find the cause of the incident.

Example 2

A short investigation could be a low level slip or trip; the consequences of this are likely to be less severe with few people involved. The cause of the slip or trip is likely to be less complex. It will not take long to interview persons involved or investigate the scene.

5.6 Each incident will be different and should be evaluated individually. The overriding factor regarding the length of the investigation is that it should be concluded as speedily as possible but with sufficient time to reach reasoned conclusions about the incident. Most incidents can be investigated and conclusions reached by Managers.

5.7 All categories detailed in the following list must be extensively investigated,

- Any fatality arising from or in connection with any work activity and/or the place of work.
- Any incident connected with work, including acts of physical violence, to an employee, pupil or a self-employed person, who as a result is unable to work for more than three consecutive days.

- Any disease that is reportable to the Health and Safety Executive as described under The Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR) (see the Accident, Incident & Disease reporting procedure and guidance for more information).

5.8 The more serious incidents may require assistance from the Education Health and Safety Team, who may decide to investigate the incident themselves.

5.9 **The Investigation.** Not all the action points below will be relevant for all investigations and the actions necessary will depend on the type of incident.

- Investigation should take place as soon as possible after the incident.
- Take control of the investigation on site.
- Where appropriate isolate and preserve the scene by stopping activities in the immediate area.
- Take any photographs, measurements or drawings that will record the layout of the investigation scene. Make notes recording as much information as possible, particularly about anything out of place or unusual.
- Do not place yourself or others at risk. Ensure uncontrolled risks are eliminated moving any item or isolate machinery to make them safe.
- Make notes of who was involved and their exact location at the time of the incident. These people will need to be interviewed at a later date.
- Ensure that appropriate paperwork is completed and that the HSE are informed (if required under RIDDOR). Copies will be needed during the investigation.
- Try to interview those involved and any witnesses as soon as possible after the incident. Good Interview technique involves:
 - a. Re-assuring the witness.
 - b. Conducting the interview away from the scene of the incident.
 - c. Recording in as much detail as possible, either written or taped.
 - d. Asking 'open questions' about;
 - i. **The purpose.** i.e. what is done? Why is it done? What else could be done? What should be done?
 - ii. **The Place.** i.e. where is it done? Why is it done there? Where else could it be done? Where should it be done?
 - iii. **Sequence.** i.e. when is it done? Why is it done? When should it be done?
 - iv. **Person.** i.e. who does it? Why does that person do it? Who else could do it? Who should do it? What training have they received?
 - v. **Means.** i.e. How is it done? Why is it done that way? How else could it be done? How should it be done?
- Obtain witness statements from those who cannot be interviewed, however you may need to interview at some point. Witness statements should be written by hand of the person giving the account and must be signed and dated by that person.
- Witnesses have the discretion to be interviewed with or without a representative. Answers to any questions should be cross-referenced with other account to establish the facts.

- Taking account of the correct procedures and safe systems of work, consider what actions or omissions might have prevented the incident and record your recommendations in the written report. You must also state who will be responsible for implementing your recommendations and the date they should be completed by.
- Record any actions that have already taken place since the incident and any planned action and associated action dates.

5.10 Investigation Report Layout and Contents: For most incident / accident investigations the completion of HS2 form will be enough. However, more detailed reports, following a serious incident, should be set out under the following headings:

Injured Parties/Persons involved

- Names of those injured or damage sustained
- Effects of the Accident/Incident
- Details of injuries
- Description
- Medical treatment given (if none please state)
- Any attendance at hospital/out-patient/doctor
- Details of damage

Investigation Findings

- Background information
- Factual details
- Reference to statements made by those involved and
- Sketches and photographs
- Immediate actions taken: by those involved
- Information given to HSE by management
- Response of the Emergency Services if involved.

Investigation Recommendation:

- Regardless of whoever undertakes the investigation it remains the responsibility of the manager to implement the recommendations.
- A clear statement on conclusions about causes both immediate and underlying.
- Where a direct cause has been identified, state it together with any other contributory causes.
- List of actions that need to be done to prevent re-occurrence
- Control measures that need to be put in place to reduce any residual risks associated with the process, plant equipment or workplace.
- Review of relevant risk assessment.

6.0 Recordkeeping

6.1 All original incident investigation reports and supporting documents/materials may be kept by the manager, with other relevant operating procedures or safety information. Records must be kept for **a minimum of fifteen years** after the investigation date, in accordance with LBS requirements to enable reference in light of any litigation, compensation or further investigation.

- 6.2 Records can be in the form of electronic or hard copy but must be available to the Corporate/Strategic Health and Safety Manager, the Education Health and Safety Team, the Health and Safety Executive or others for audit and investigation purposes.

7.0 Further advice and assistance

- 7.1 If at any time during an investigation further advice, assistance or information, is needed contact Education Health and Safety Team at John Smith House (extensions 55034, 55035 or 55259) who will be able to help.