

SAFETY BULLETIN

Ensure your Team is Prepared!

Using The Power Of A Near Miss

High Reliability Organizations are preoccupied with what can go wrong. This preoccupation with safety before an incident occurs, is a key tool in preventing injuries.

An accident investigation is an important tool that helps fire departments learn from past mistakes. This knowledge gives department's critical information in preventing future injuries from occurring as the result of similar circumstances. The only problem with an accident investigation is that it is conducted after the fact. To have an accident to investigate means that something went wrong enough to cause injury to an employee or property damage.

Studies have found a direct relationship between the number of serious injuries, the number of minor injuries and the number of close calls, or near misses. The data varies but conventional wisdom believes that for every fatality there are roughly 10 disabling injuries (which ends the firefighters career), 30 minor injuries and around 600 near misses. Simply stated - every day fire departments experience near misses that could easily have resulted in an injury but for whatever reason with the result being no one was injured.

It is foreign for employees to want to come forward and report activities that are not safe or are a violation of policy. Employees may fear management's reaction to learning of an unsafe act more than the consequences of an injury that did not occur. It is important for forward thinking organizations to recognize the power of near miss and reward employees for helping correct activities that will result in an injury sooner or later.

A high reliability organization hungers for knowledge to prevent injuries before they occur. Studying near misses and learning what when wrong before an injury is a key component to injury and accident prevention.