



Loss Control Insights

It's Your Responsibility – Report Close Calls

Report Close Calls

A worker spotted his partner side-grinding without wearing a face shield and reminded him that grinding wheels can disintegrate. About three minutes later, that's exactly what happened. Thankfully, the worker had followed his co-worker's advice and donned a face shield. He wasn't hurt.

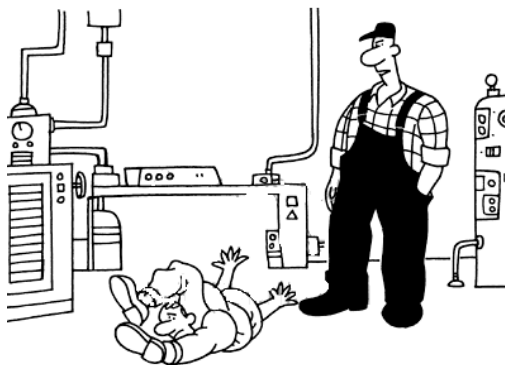
Such incidents are typical examples of thousands of close calls occurring in workplaces around the world every day. It's been estimated that for every serious injury, there may be 600 close calls.

Letting unsafe situations slide without reporting them to your supervisor is like telling your co-workers: "I escaped with eight of my nine lives intact. Let's see if you can do the same." Imagine the guilt you would feel if a serious injury or fatality took place because the victim wasn't told of a potential hazard that you were fortunate enough to survive without getting hurt.

Close calls can be caused by a number of situations, some working in tandem. Here are a few examples:

- Poor machinery or tool maintenance.
- Failure to wear personal protective equipment.
- Inadequate machine guarding.
- Falling, tripping or slipping as a result of poor workplace housekeeping.
- Ineffective training and supervision.

Perhaps you experienced a close call or "near miss" today or this week without even realizing it. Did you step over a spill in the coffee room? Slips and falls are the third leading cause of disabling injuries in North America. Have you opened a door in your work area lately, only to discover someone else coming right at you? What if that person were carrying boxes or you didn't look up in time?



"Aren't you supposed to be cleaning the pretzel machine?"

While it is the supervisor's responsibility to look at immediate and underlying causes for the incident and develop an action plan for prevention, it's your responsibility to report close calls. Working with your supervisor will ensure close call incidents are eliminated.

Does a spill in the coffee room have to be reported? Maybe not, but it would only take you 30 seconds to wipe up that spill. If there are strict regulations in your workplace

when it comes to such duties or if you are not sure what the spill is, then yes – it is your responsibility to report this spill – no matter how small – to your supervisor. How about bumping into someone like in our second example? Perhaps your supervisor is unaware of this hazard. It needs to be brought to his or her attention to see if something can be done about it. Nothing can get done if it isn't reported.

By taking care of hazards at an early stage, the later stages of serious and fatal injury can be avoided.

What should you do if you observe a hazard? Eliminate the hazard if you are able to do so safely and are

authorized to make any required changes or repairs. Report the situation and your actions to your supervisor.

You should also report promptly any injuries, however minor. There are several reasons for this.

- First is to ensure you get the right treatment. What appears to be a minor chemical exposure could cause a major burn and what seems to be a small wound could become seriously infected if not treated correctly.
- Second, reporting the incident provides documentation you may need later if things become worse than they first appear.
- Third, the hazard causing the injury can be removed because you reported it.

After experiencing a close call the usual response is to dust yourself off, consider yourself lucky and go on with your work without reporting the incident. Safety has nothing to do with luck. A close call is a red flag warning you that something is wrong. Report all unsafe work practices to your supervisor.