



In our day to day lives, we frequently take on tasks that put us directly in the line of danger. Whether from an at-risk situation or unsafe act, incidents can happen at any moment in time. While ignoring them is easier, reporting and correcting these situations ensures the safety of others who may encounter them in the future.

The majority of the time, at-risk behaviors and situations have a low likelihood of resulting in injury. However, due to their high occurrence rate, they do have the potential to cause injury. The sooner these situations and behaviors are taken care of, the better.

This week, we will discuss why it is so important to report at-risk situations, analyze different risk levels, and establish why intervention is necessary for improving workplace safety.

Monday – Why do incidents occur?

When a colleague is injured, we try to find the root cause first. In the worst cases, investigations find that the same at-risk situations occur before the incident but are never reported since no injuries are sustained. If these “near miss” situations or behaviors were not ignored, the number of injuries they cause would dwindle. It should not take an injury or death to indicate something needs to change.

The incident’s root cause can range from individual carelessness to machine malfunction, which makes it difficult to identify if you’re on the outside looking in. This makes reporting at-risk situations even more important. You may complete a task without injury, but if you notice something is wrong with the tools you are using or you find yourself cutting corners and practicing unsafe behavior, make an effort to correct the situation for future safety. Don’t ignore root causes.

Tuesday – What is a near miss?

We often hear the term “near miss”, but what does that mean exactly? A near miss is a situation where an incident, minor or major, is narrowly avoided. This situation does not cause any bodily harm and does not damage equipment, but has the potential to do so.

To help you identify a near miss in the future, think about a recent time when you barely avoided an injury while working on the job or partaking in an activity you enjoy. Discuss in your work group:

- What was your most recent near miss or unsafe action, either at work or at home?
- What would that near miss look like to someone who saw it?
- If an injury incident had occurred, to you or someone else, how would you have felt? How would that incident make the person you love the most feel?



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 40 – September 30 - October 4

At Risk Situations – Why it is important to report

The Heinrich 300-29-1 model states that for every **300** near misses, there are **29** minor injuries and **1** major injury. These injuries significantly decrease when near misses are corrected before they have the chance to affect someone.

When reporting a near miss, remember to give as much detail as possible. Each detail is potentially a key for identifying a root cause and preventing a disaster.



Wednesday – Safety Opportunities

Just as near misses have the potential of becoming incidents, unrecognized safety opportunities can lead to near misses, and eventually cause serious injuries.

As you go through your daily tasks, stay on the lookout for safety opportunities. Do not wait for a near miss to occur for you to file a report. Safety opportunities are hidden in plain sight and require just a little more attention to find.

Safety opportunities are commonly found in:

- **Unsafe working situations**, such as a physical element that can generate risk and cause an injury. This can include water or oil on the floor, a lack of procedures, unauthorized guard removal, or a blocked safety exit.
- **Unsafe behaviors**, such as a colleague working in an awkward position or not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Unsafe equipment may lead to unsafe behaviors and decisions, as colleagues unintentionally develop “work arounds” and bad habits.

Whatever the case, identify and report any safety opportunities you find. If you don’t have one already, start a simple “blue card” reporting system: write safety opportunity ideas on blue index cards and drop them in a box. The Safety Action Team, EHS manager, or safety leader should “own” the box. Review the cards every week and track corrective actions. Make sure to follow up with the person who submitted the blue card about status and completion of the corrective actions. Ignoring near misses and safety opportunities, or hoping someone else takes care of them, has the potential to lead to injury or death.

Challenge: What safety opportunities can you find in your facility? Have everyone try and report at least one safety opportunity by the end of the day to improve workplace safety.

Thursday – Identifying Dangerous Situations

A dangerous situation is different from a near miss or a safety opportunity. Some work is dangerous by its very nature. For example, window washing on high-rise skyscrapers is dangerous work. It involves people standing on



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 40 – September 30 - October 4

At Risk Situations – Why it is important to report

scaffolding controlled by wires, ropes, and pulley systems hundreds of feet above the ground. The scaffold platform is affected by wind and weather conditions out of the workers' control.

Dangerous situations generally involve high-risk work where the incident-causing factors are out of human control. Identifying dangerous work situations is good, but mitigating them is even better. If you cannot completely eliminate the dangers, try to mitigate their effects.

We mitigate dangerous situations with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), greater oversight, specific procedures and working at a safe pace. In our window washing example, the workers should:

- Wear PPE including helmets, safety glasses, fall prevention harnesses, ropes, carabiners, and more.
- Assign two people as spotters, one on the ground and one on the roof, to ensure cables are secured and operate properly, wind and weather conditions are safe, and hazards are removed.
- Utilize communication equipment between themselves and their coworkers to safely follow procedures for raising and lowering the scaffold properly.
- Schedule additional time on site to safely complete the job, re-schedule the job when dangerous conditions exist, and work at a safe pace.

Maybe the dangerous situation you identify is something your coworkers have skipped over time and time again. We each have a different point of view, and someone may notice something others don't see, especially someone who is new to the workplace.

Also, every person's risk toleration is different. A dangerous situation that I deem risky may seem fine to you, and vice versa. Everyone's risk toleration at home and at play is different. But in the workplace, we need to agree on the dangerous situations and always err on the side of caution. Then we analyze and mitigate the dangerous situation the best we can so that everyone is safe.

Discussion question for the group: If you owned a motorcycle, and there is no helmet requirement law, would you wear a helmet when you ride? Is riding a motorcycle a dangerous situation to you? Is it risky?

Friday – Dealing with Dangerous Work

Sometimes, coworkers may unknowingly put themselves in dangerous situations. For example, someone so focused on their work may not realize when they step into a forklift traffic lane. If not caught in time, they can sustain serious injuries. If you see a coworker practicing unsafe behavior, stop them, but only if it is safe to do so. Intervention is necessary to stop dangerous behavior from becoming an injury incident. A simple reminder or offering some help can go a long way in protecting your colleagues and keeping your work environment safe.

If you notice a colleague working dangerously:

- Ask them what they are doing and what their goal is.
- Ask why they are working dangerously.



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 40 – September 30 - October 4

At Risk Situations – Why it is important to report

- Ask if they know the correct and safe way to perform this task. If they do not know, find a safety leader to demonstrate.
- If it is safe, do not leave your coworker to work dangerously. Find a supervisor or manager and let them know what is going on.

Your safety and the safety of your coworkers depend on the whole team working together safely. We have a mutual responsibility for each other. No one wants to see their colleague, friend, and team member injured or sent to the hospital. Remember, it is better to take extra time to ensure safe working, than to lose time to an injury or death.

One corrected safety opportunity can prevent many injuries.