



Incident & Near Miss Investigation

A Guide for Emergency Service Organizations

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Preface

Investigate Every Incident & Near Miss

An emergency service organization (ESO) may routinely navigate high risk situations in order to accomplish its mission to mitigate and control hazards within a community. Personnel regularly complete tasks with varying degrees of risk without an adverse outcome. Despite this, the actions of emergency responders can contribute to negative outcomes; including: property damage, illness, injury or even death.

In order to better understand and manage risks associated with their operations, an ESO should conduct an investigation for each **incident** or **near miss**. While it is impossible to eliminate risk within emergency services, each of these events present an opportunity to learn and improve. To do so, organizations must make a commitment to conduct an investigation following an incident or near miss. An individual or group may be selected to conduct the investigation. This individual or group should make an effort to explore the details surrounding the event from perspectives outside and within the organization.

If an incident or near miss occurs and is not investigated, the event is a lesson gone unlearned. If unsafe acts or conditions are not corrected, the next occurrence may be more serious or even fatal. Each investigation should identify corrective actions to prevent recurrence of a similar event in the future. Every year, more than 100,000 injuries and over 100 deaths occur to emergency responders (both fire and EMS personnel) during training or on actual emergency calls. It is the goal of VFIS to help reduce that number.

Definition

Incident

an unanticipated event which resulted in damage, illness, injury or a fatality.

Near Miss

an unanticipated event which had the potential to, but did not, result in damage, illness, injury or a fatality.

Introduction to Investigation

When incidents occur, natural feelings of concern and sympathy may be present. Humans possess an incredible sense of resilience. Emergency responders accomplish their mission despite being confronted with challenges. Emergency responders pride themselves on “picking up the pieces” and continuing to move forward. Unfortunately, many emergency responders view an investigation as a fault-finding mission. This inaccuracy can lead to mistrust, dishonesty, frustration or other emotional reactions. An investigation should identify and address problems through a structured and transparent process, rather than concealing or hiding mistakes. The findings of the investigation should provide valuable “lessons learned” and contribute to the institutional knowledge of the ESO. In order to be effective, an investigation must never become a fault finding mission.



	Investigation	Fault Finding Mission
Definition	A discovery and examination of facts using a systematic method	A criticism or effort to place blame
Method	Organized, driven by a plan	Unorganized, driven by emotion
Focus	Organization or process	Individual
Outcome	Provides an opportunity to learn or improve individual or group performance	Provides little or no benefit to any involved party

If the ESO conducts an investigation for the sole purpose of assigning individual fault, personnel may be motivated to:

- View the investigation and entire safety program as punitive
- Perceive the investigation team to be unfair
- Develop fear, anger, panic or other emotions
- Reduce the accuracy or completeness of information
- Diminish the ability to prevent future events

Legal Consultation

An ESO should consult with their qualified legal counsel and insurance professional to develop and implement policies, procedures and guidelines related to incident and near miss investigations.

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What Should Be Investigated?

An investigation should be conducted in the event of any incident or near miss; including:

- Injury/death to personnel
- Injury/death to a civilian involved
- Exposure to hazardous substance
- Violation of policy, procedure or regulation
- Involving the care or handling of a patient
- Any series involving the same:
 - Location
 - Equipment
 - Personnel

Special Investigations

The nature of an incident may result in several other types of special investigations. The purpose of these investigations may be beyond of the scope of the ESO investigation team. Some types of incidents may require a limited ESO investigation team comprised of members with specific roles within the organization or expertise. An ESO should implement policies, procedures or guidelines to address these special circumstances within the organization.

Insurance Claim Investigations

An insurance claim investigation is conducted by an insurance company in response to an insurance claim. An insurance claims representative may need to evaluate the legal liability for damages and injuries. As part of the insurance claim investigation, the insurer may request information from the ESO.

Internal (human resources) Investigations

A human resources investigation is conducted by the ESO in response to a report of workplace harassment or discrimination, workplace violence or other types of sensitive personnel issues. Due to the level of confidentiality and privacy required, these investigations may only involve management, human resources representatives and personnel with direct knowledge of the incident. Legal counsel should be consulted immediately due to the complexity of these investigations. If a criminal act is discovered during an internal investigation, the ESO should contact law enforcement to initiate a criminal investigation promptly.

Criminal Investigations

A criminal investigation is conducted by law enforcement in response to a criminal complaint or conduct. A liaison between the ESO and law enforcement should be selected and legal counsel should be consulted immediately due to the complexity of these investigations. The ESO should cooperate with law enforcement as it has been advised by legal counsel. Off-duty criminal conduct involving personnel may also lead to an internal (human resources) investigation.

Other Investigations

A private investigation may be conducted by a third-party investigator in response to a civil or another type of complaint. A private investigator may be hired by an individual, business or an ESO. A regulatory investigation may be conducted by a regulatory agency in response to a report of a violation. An ESO should ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Investigation Team

The purpose of an investigation is to determine facts surrounding an event and improve safety within the ESO. An **investigation team** member must obtain information on how and why the event occurred, analyze the information to determine the cause or contributing factors and develop recommendations to prevent recurrence. The investigation team should represent several perspectives within and possibly outside of the organization. The investigation team should remain impartial during the course of its investigation with any actual or perceived conflicts of interest managed appropriately.

This guide describes the process, explains best practices and provides several techniques an investigation team should use. All relevant information must be collected, analyzed, and reported. All information collected should be reported as accurately and completely as possible.

Investigation Team Members

All levels of the organization should be represented on the investigation team; including:

- Executive Officer
- Managing Officer
- Supervising Officer
- Safety Officer or Committee
- Non-Management Representative
- Special Representative (Legal Counsel, Medical Director, Insurance Professional, etc.)

The investigation team members should regularly review trends associated within the organization and all team members should remain current with current industry and risk management best practices. The ESO should provide regular training to investigation team members. Collectively, the investigation team should analyze trends and provide a summary to all personnel on an at least annual basis.

Management of the Investigation Process

The investigation process may be managed differently within each organization. The organizational structure may be specifically referenced within the process. It is the responsibility of management to determine how the investigation process can be effectively implemented within the organization. The roles and responsibilities of management include:

- Provide overall direction and guidance
- Ensure timely reporting and quality documentation
- Support the investigation team
- Consult qualified legal counsel or other professionals as necessary
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the investigation process

Fire Department Safety Officer Association Certification Program

A nationally recognized certification program is available for the **Health and Safety Officer** and the **Incident Safety Officer**. The program is aligned with industry standards, including **NFPA 1521: Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications**². HSO and ISO provide recognition that a safety officer has demonstrated proficiency and an ability to perform their duties in accordance with industry standards.

Roles & Responsibilities of Fire/EMS Officers

Supervising Fire/EMS Officer

All supervising officers should be trained to recognize which events should be investigated and who should conduct the investigation. It is important a supervising officer recognize the severity of an incident or near miss. A procedure should define the criteria and process to notify the most appropriate level of organizational leadership. A supervising officer may be able to address the situation themselves or escalate to a managing officer.

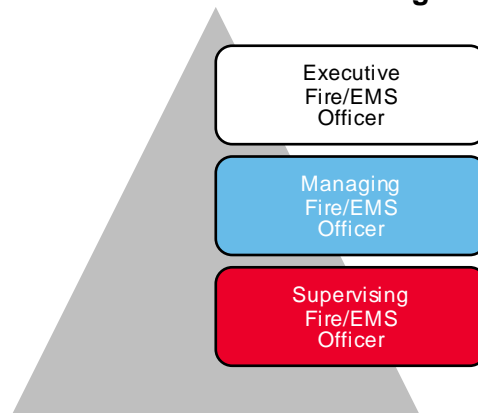
Managing Fire/EMS Officer

All managing officers should be trained to recognize which events should be investigated and who should conduct the investigation. It is important a managing officer recognize the severity of an incident or near miss and provide appropriate direction to the supervising officer. A procedure should define the criteria and process to notify the most appropriate level of organizational leadership. A managing officer may be able to address the situation themselves, transfer to another managing officer (safety officer) or escalate to an executive officer.

Executive Fire/EMS Officer

An executive officer should train managing and supervising officers to manage daily operations at the lowest appropriate level. It is important an executive officer establish procedures to guide the recognition of severity and actions to be taken immediately following an incident or near miss. A procedure should define the criteria and process to notify the most appropriate level of organizational leadership. Because many events can be adequately addressed by supervising and managing officers, an executive officer should be notified and stay informed, as necessary. The executive officer may decide, at any time, to provide direction or assume a primary role in response or investigation functions.

Three Levels of Fire/EMS Management



Roles & Responsibilities of All Personnel

The initial actions of personnel involved in an incident or near miss can make or break the investigation efforts which will follow. All personnel should be trained on what to do if an incident or near miss occurs, typically with the notification of a supervisor as soon as possible.

Personnel should review the policy, procedure or guideline which outlines the types of events required to be reported.

Reporting

Incident Report

The submission of an **incident report** should trigger a notification to the investigation team and appropriate levels of management. The incident report form should be standardized and collect the necessary information to assess the severity and initiate the investigation. The ESO's procedures should outline who is responsible for the completion of an incident report and when it should be submitted by.

Most incidents are reported promptly by the personnel involved due to the damages, injuries or other effects of the incident. Because the effects are often noticeable, personnel are typically unable to dismiss the effects or hide the incident from management. An ESO can manage the negative impacts of the incident and prevent future incidents by creating a culture which supports prompt incident reporting. Failure to report an incident or dishonesty during an incident investigation may be subject to disciplinary action.

Near Miss Report

The submission of a **near miss report** should trigger a notification to the investigation team and appropriate levels of management. The near miss report form should be standardized and collect the necessary information to initiate the investigation. An incident report and near miss report may be separate or combined forms.

A near miss is more likely not to be reported or formally investigated. A near miss may not be as noticeable as an incident because it does not result in significant damage, serious injury or death. As such, a near miss may be unknowingly dismissed or knowingly hidden by the personnel involved. As a result, no one else may be aware the near miss occurred.

According to the National Safety Council³, "near misses occur every day in every industry, and most serious, catastrophic and loss-producing incidents are preceded by these warnings". An ESO can prevent an incident by creating a culture which supports near miss reporting. Personnel must be encouraged to report a near miss without fear of punitive action. If possible, an anonymous reporting system may encourage the reporting of near misses. By investigating a near miss using the same process as an incident, the unsafe acts and unsafe conditions can be corrected without suffering the consequences associated with an incident.

Incident Report Forms

Incident Report Form is provided as a template. An ESO should establish a standardized form for incident reports.

Vehicle Incident Report Packet is an item available to be ordered at www.VFIS.com. The packet contains instructions for use, a pencil, an incident report form and witness cards.



Reporting procedures should be included in orientation programs, driver training programs and be regularly included in refresher training. A series of policies, procedures or guidelines should address:

- Collisions involving owned or leased vehicles
- Collisions involving any vehicle operated for official purposes, regardless of ownership
- Any damage to a vehicle, whether moving or parked, while operated by personnel
- Involvement in any incident damage claims could be made, even if the vehicle had not made contact with other objects or vehicles
- Incidents involving patient care, patient handling or while transporting a patient
- Internal or external complaints

At minimum, the following information should be gathered at the scene:

- Date, time and location of incident
- Name(s)
- Address(es)
- Driver license number(s)
- License plate number(s)
- Insurance information
- Involved parties
- Witnesses

Discoverability of Evidence

Discoverable evidence is any **evidence** which could be admitted into evidence during civil or criminal proceedings through a court order. Generally, any evidence that is collected during an investigation may be discoverable, unless its development was directed by your legal counsel and maintained as “work product” of an attorney. Keep in mind that even evidence intended to be maintained as attorney work product could potentially become subject to discovery if ordered by the court. The discoverability of evidence should not deter an organization from conducting an investigation, except if qualified legal counsel or insurance professional request otherwise. An ESO should consult with qualified legal counsel to develop a policy, procedure or guideline to protect against the admissibility of evidence for



Attorney Work Product

Litigation can be anticipated if the incident involved significant damage, serious injury or death. If legal counsel has been retained, investigation files or documents for these incidents should be marked “**prepared in anticipation of litigation**”. This statement on files and documents generally protects its content as the work product of an attorney. This practice should not be routinely utilized for all files or documents within the organization. Consult with legal counsel on proper documentation labeling.

information developed during the ESO’s investigation.

Dissemination of Reports

A policy, procedure or guideline should detail the authorized use and dissemination of incident reports, investigation reports and after-action reviews. Any dissemination of information should be done judiciously. Some information may be required to be released by law under certain circumstances such as HIPAA or the Freedom of Information Act. In consultation with legal counsel, an ESO should determine if any content can or should be redacted. The possible discoverability of these reports should not deter the investigation team or any other personnel from reporting facts truthfully. For more information on documentation related to investigations, refer to the “Documentation” section of this guide.

The Investigation Process

An investigation team should follow a prescribed process to ensure the investigation is conducted fairly and completely. For the purposes of this guide, the investigation process has been outlined to consist of six (6) phases. While the steps may vary depending upon the type of event or conditions at the scene, the process used by an ESO should be consistent. The investigation process should be outlined within policies, procedures or guidelines.

<p>Control the Scene</p>	<p>The primary concern immediately following an event is to ensure all injuries are cared for and the scene is secured to prevent further harm or damage and preserve evidence.</p>
<p>Collect Information</p>	<p>The investigation team should collect and document all relevant information for future analysis. An Incident Report Form should be completed by all personnel involved in accordance with the ESO's procedures.</p>
<p>Analyze Information</p>	<p>The investigation team should begin to analyze information for the purpose of identifying the cause and contributing factors.</p>
<p>Investigation Report</p>	<p>The investigation report must accurately and clearly describe the contributing factors and causes using the information gathered during the investigation. The investigation report may recommend corrective actions to prevent recurrence. Consultation with qualified legal counsel, insurance claims representative, union representative or other professionals may be necessary in some circumstances. An Investigation Report should be completed by the investigation team at the conclusion of the investigation.</p>
<p>After Action Review</p>	<p>An After Action Review (AAR) may contain information from the investigation report, excluding sensitive or identifiable information, to develop a comprehensive report or training program. The content within an AAR should be shared with all appropriate personnel as the "lessons learned" from a particular event. An AAR may serve as a record which may be used to compare similar events or identify long-term trends.</p>
<p>Corrective Actions</p>	<p>The investigation process cannot be completed until the corrective actions have been implemented. A system for monitoring implementation of the corrective actions is necessary to ensure a similar event can be prevented in the future.</p>

Investigation Phase

Phase I: Control the Scene

The first priority immediately following an event is to ensure anyone injured receives prompt medical attention and any hazardous conditions present are mitigated. Then, access to the scene should be controlled in order to preserve evidence. An incident or near miss should be investigated as soon as practical after they occur. The sooner the investigation begins, the more likely the investigation team will be able to collect the necessary information. If interviews cannot be conducted immediately, the investigation team should obtain name and contact information for all involved parties and witnesses to be contacted later.

Depending on the nature of the event and the conditions of the scene, the investigation team or first arriving supervisor should ensure the following steps are taken:

- Assess the situation
- Mitigate hazardous conditions and prevent secondary incidents
- Request appropriate additional resources (EMS, Law Enforcement, etc.)
- Establish a liaison between the ESO and the investigating law enforcement officer, if applicable
- Limit access to the scene
- Preserve evidence
- Determine loss potential
- Notify insurance professional and legal counsel.



Phase II: Collect Information

Once the immediate actions have been taken to stabilize the scene, the investigation team should collect information through observations, photographs and interviews. This phase may occur in cooperation with a law enforcement agency. The collection of information may occur at the scene or other locations. The investigation team should collect information needed to analyze the event, identify causes and contributing factors.



Observation is the documented accounts from the perspective of the investigation team.

Examples of documented observations include:

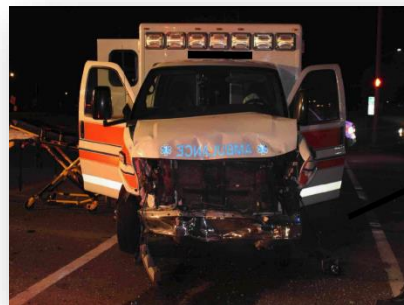
- A diagram of the scene
- Record weather conditions



Media is the documented accounts based upon the content captured by audio/visual technology. Media may have captured the time of the event or be used to document the observations of the investigation team. Media may also assist with the preservation of evidence that may otherwise be lost. Media should be documented with either a digital time-stamp or label corresponding to an evidence log. Media should be captured using an organization-owned camera, if possible. Use of personal cameras, including personal cell phone cameras, should be avoided. All available media should be collected to be used in the investigation.

Examples of media include:

- Photography
- Audio recording (radio transmissions)
- Vehicle dashboard or body cameras
- Surveillance cameras





Interviews document the statements of involved parties and witnesses based upon their perspective and recollection of the event. These statements are often the most important tool for an investigation team to possess. If permitted by law and with the permission of everyone present, all interviews should be recorded. The date, time, names of individuals in the room, reason for the interview and verbal consent to record the interview should be stated at the beginning of the recorded interview.

Interviews should always be conducted in accordance with all applicable policies, procedures and guidelines. In addition, the interviews should always be conducted to comply with all applicable laws, regulations or other legally-binding agreements.

Additional considerations for an interview include:

- Briefing on the protections under the preparation for the discoverability of evidence policy
- Union representation or other conditions of a collective bargaining agreement
- Public Safety Personnel Bill of Rights legislation (varies by state)



Types of Questions

The types of questions asked during an interview influence the environment of the interview and the amount or type of information received. The four basic types of questions are open, closed, probing and leading or loaded.

Open-Ended Questions: These questions ask for general information and allow the interviewee to structure the response. Open questions provide information that the investigator uses to ask other types of questions. This type of question should not create a defensive attitude because the interviewee controls the response. An example is, "Would you tell me how the incident happened?"

Closed-Ended Questions: Closed ended questions are designed to limit the responses available to the interviewee. Closed questions allow the investigator to ask many questions in a short time and are best for following up on a response to an open question. This type of question is appropriate when limited or specific information is required. An example is, "Do you believe you were speeding?" Closed-ended questions allow the interviewer to hone in on specifics. If not used properly; however, the rapid fire questioning sequence can make the interviewee feel like they are on a witness stand. If the investigator uses closed questions inappropriately, the interviewee will have a tendency to become defensive and resentful.

Probing Questions: These questions are used to clarify information or gain additional information. Probing questions are always based on the information given by the interviewee, usually in response to an open question. Probing questions are useful because they focus the interviewee's response to specific information. They can be used to clarify a response or an inconsistency. An example is, "What method did you use to check for clearance behind your vehicle before backing up?"

Leading (Loaded) Questions have a hidden agenda and usually ask the interviewee to agree with a position already held by the interviewer. An example is, "Don't you agree that the driver training you received was adequate?"

Types of Witnesses

Eye Witness

- A person present during the event who provides their perspective

Expert Witness

- A person with academic, vocational or other qualifications who provides a professional opinion or explanation relevant to the investigation.

Other Witnesses

- A person who has information or facts relevant to the investigation.

Interview Steps

At the beginning of every interview the **purpose of the interview** should be stated. A review of the investigation process and the role of the investigation team may put the individual at ease. A briefing on discoverability of evidence and any applicable protection granted by the organization's policy should be provided to an involved party or witness.

The individual should be asked to provide a detailed **description of events** from their perspective. It is important to not interrupt during the description of their recollection of the events. The interview should begin with open-ended questions. Then, closed-ended questions may be asked to clarify a statement during an answer to an open-ended question. Closed and probing questions are appropriate to gain specific detailed information. The series of questions and the type of question are determined by the flow of information during the interview. During the interview, observation of non-verbal clues should be noted. For example, a facial expression may indicate a lack of cooperation. An interview must be conducted in an objective, professional manner to ensure that the interview achieves the intended results.

Interviews should be conducted as soon as possible after the event. No matter how soon after the event the interview is conducted, **verify the comprehension** of the individual. Delays may affect the quality or scope of details an individual is able to recall from the event. An interview should not be conducted if psychological distress may negatively impact an individual's ability to provide accurate information. An interview must never delay medical treatment.

Often, the individual involved may have a **recommendation to prevent the event** from occurring again in the future. While discussing options, the individual is empowered to help establish meaningful change within the organization. Always try to end the interview on a positive note. Remember to thank the individual for their time and cooperation.

Active Listening

A series of verbal and non-verbal reactions can indicate active listening. If the interviewer does not make an effort to practice active listening, the individual will reduce the amount of information provided or become less cooperative. Non-verbal active listening techniques include eye contact, head nodding and appropriate facial expressions. Verbal active listening techniques include paraphrasing and summarizing.

Paraphrase

An example of a paraphrasing is: "If I understand you correctly, you were wearing your safety belt?"

If the response is "right" or "that is correct", the paraphrase serves as a closed question.

If the response is "no" or "that is incorrect", the understanding paraphrase serves as an open or probing question with clarification or additional information to follow.

Summarize

An example of summarizing is, "let's go over the events that led to the incident."

The difference between summarizing and paraphrasing is that summarizing covers all the key points related to a specific topic or the entire interview.



Phase III: Analyze Information:

The information gathered during an investigation will need to be organized and analyzed. If possible, all information should be collected before the analysis begins. Anytime new information is received, the overall analysis may be impacted. All of the remaining phases rely upon an accurate analysis of the event.

An incident is often caused by unsafe acts or unsafe conditions.

Unsafe acts are human acts which were committed by an individual that cause or contribute to an incident or near miss.

Unsafe conditions are the equipment, tools, materials, structures or physical environment that cause or contribute to an incident or near miss.

Unsafe Act	Unsafe Condition
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to use proper personal protective equipment• Improper decontamination procedures• Failure to comply with speed limits• Text messaging while driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hazardous (IDLH) scene conditions• Contaminated equipment, vehicles or other locations• Insufficient supply of proper personal protective equipment• Faulty equipment• Distractions in the cab of a vehicle

An unsafe act or unsafe condition may be identified as either a cause or contributing factor to the incident or near miss.

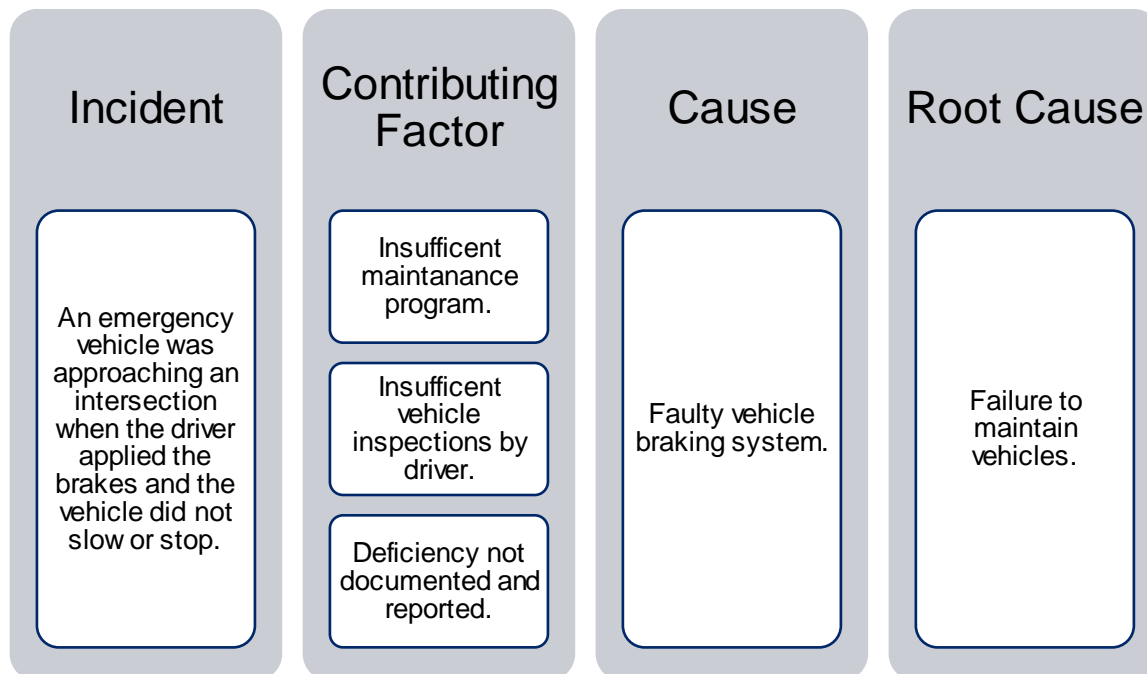
Merriam-Webster defines causes and contributing factors as:

Cause is something that brings about an effect or a result.

Contributing factor is something that helps cause a result.

The investigation team must be prepared to identify the reasons why unsafe acts and unsafe conditions were permitted to exist. The **root cause** is the reason the unsafe condition or unsafe action occurred, which resulted in the incident or near miss.





The purpose of the investigation and the role of the investigation team should be reiterated before the causes and contributing factors are announced. The emphasis must be improvement and prevention, not fault-finding. It is natural for someone involved with the event, especially those responsible for tasks identified as causes or contributing factors, to react defensively. The investigation team must support its findings with factual information gathered over the course of the investigation.

Phase IV: Investigation Report

The investigation team findings should be documented in an investigation report, which may also be referred to as a post-incident analysis¹. An investigation report should be completed anytime an investigation is launched. The length and detail contained within an investigation report may vary depending the duration and complexity of the investigation. The investigation team should report the investigation process, information collected and all other findings in the report. As described earlier, the investigation report may be discoverable evidence. As such, the investigation report should avoid placing blame.

An advance draft of the investigation report should be sent to management for review. Executive Fire/EMS Officers must support the investigation team and the purpose of investigation to prevent future incidents. The investigation team must be prepared to steadfastly support their findings when faced with criticism. When faced with criticism, individuals naturally become defensive. An investigation report is intended to provide factual information for the purpose of improvement. The report may provide specific recommendations for improvement.

Phase V: After Action Review

An after action review (AAR) should be conducted following any major event. The purpose of AAR is to review and provide additional recommendations for improvement. An AAR may be based upon a review of the investigation report developed by the investigation team. The AAR should be chronologically organized to illustrate the sequence of events. Additional internal and external references may be used to develop the recommendations. The format of an AAR is flexible, but is most commonly independently conducted by a review committee. A facilitated discussion in a small or large group setting may be a less formal option.

Phase VI: Follow Up on Corrective Actions

Following the investigation report and/or after action review, management should develop a plan to address the causes and contributing factors. The nature of the corrective actions may require collaboration between multiple individuals or group within the organization.

Documentation

Any document related to an investigation may be discoverable evidence or required for insurance claims. All personnel should be trained on proper documentation. Documentation should be complete, accurate, timely and professionally written.

All information collected during the investigation should be kept on-file in accordance with the ESO's [record retention policy](#), which should comply with retention requirements mandated by applicable statutes, regulations and other laws. The following should be retained indefinitely:

- Incident Reports
- Investigation Report; including:
 - Documented observations
 - Media
 - Interviews
- Police Reports
- Medical or Autopsy Reports



RESPONDER+HELP

Additional Resources

- Forms
- Checklists
- Report Templates

www.responderhelp.com

Monitor Investigation Status

An individual should be designated to monitor the status of the investigation process. An investigation may require follow up communication to ensure the timely completion of reports. An investigation can become a lengthy process, even without unnecessary delays. In order to keep the investigation process on track, organization and communication must be monitored on an ongoing basis.



Corrective Actions

Following the investigation report and/or after action review, management should develop a plan to address the causes and contributing factors in collaboration with the investigation team. The nature of the corrective actions may require collaboration between multiple individuals or group within the organization. If corrective actions are identified, but never implemented, the same unsafe acts or unsafe conditions are likely to continue to occur in the future. Unfortunately, the next time unsafe acts or conditions occur, the result may be even more severe. An individual with an appropriate level of authority should be designated to assign, prioritize and ensure all corrective actions have been implemented. The investigation team, safety committee or management should be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of corrective actions on an on-going basis.

Examples of corrective actions may include:

- Implementation or revision of a policy, procedure or guideline
- Education or training of personnel
- Signage or warning labels
- Upgraded equipment with more advanced safety features
- Improved personal protective equipment

Conclusion

Many of the tasks completed by emergency services personnel have an element of inherent risk. On occasion, if (or when) something goes wrong, these risks can result in significant damage, serious injury or even death. A detailed and thorough investigation of these adverse events can provide an opportunity to improve. The consequence of an incident should never be suffered twice. An incident can be prevented by addressing the unsafe acts and conditions of a near miss. An organization should investigate, review and take action following every incident and near miss.

References

1. National Fire Protection Association. (2018). *NFPA 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*.
2. National Fire Protection Association. (2020). *NFPA 1521 Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications*.
3. National Safety Council. (2020). *What is a Near Miss in the Workplace Really Telling You?*
<http://www.nsc.org>.

Glossary

Cause is something that brings about an effect or a result.

Contributing factor is something that helps cause a result.

Discoverable evidence is any evidence which could be admitted into evidence during civil or criminal proceedings through a court order.

Evidence something that furnishes proof.

Incident an unanticipated event which resulted in damage, illness, injury or a fatality.

Incident report a document which describes the details of an incident from the perspective of an individual.

Investigation team a group of individuals appointed to investigate an incident or near miss. The team may be led by a safety officer.

Near miss an unanticipated event which had the potential to, but did not, result in damage, illness, injury or a fatality.

Near miss report a document which describes the details of an incident from the perspective of an individual.

Record retention policy is a policy which outlines where a record is stored and when a record should be disposed of. The policy may also include specific instructions on the proper disposal of a record.

Root cause is the reason the unsafe condition or unsafe action occurred, which resulted in the incident or near miss.

Unsafe acts are human acts which were committed by an individual that cause or contribute to an incident or near miss.

Unsafe conditions are the equipment, tools, materials, structures or physical environment that cause or contribute to an incident or near miss.

Appendix A: Media Collection & Organization Tips

Begin by constructing a diagram of the scene. The diagram will assist in the reconstruction of the scene using all available information, including media.

As a minimum, the diagram should include:

- Magnetic north orientation
- Position of vehicles, tools or equipment prior to and after the incident
- Position of all personnel, victims, witnesses prior to and after the incident
- Key reference points such as:
 - Intersections
 - Signs and other traffic control devices
 - Sidewalks
- Weather conditions such as:
 - Sun location
 - Environmental factors (water, ice, fog, etc.)
- Distances between objects and size of the objects on diagram

Photography Guidelines:

Overshoot by taking as many photos as possible. Once the scene has been cleared, there may not be an opportunity for a re-shoot.

Record the content with a description of each photo. The description may be important later, especially with detailed close-up photos.

Be systematic about the sequence of the photography. Consider the following steps:

1. **Overall view** of the entire scene from a distance.
2. **Key reference points** and their relationship to the scene.
3. **Close circle view within 50 feet** of the scene with focus on position of vehicles, skid marks, debris, etc.
4. **Detailed view**, with particular attention areas containing evidence or damage.
5. **Direction of travel** for any persons, vehicles or equipment time of the incident.
6. **360 view** from the viewpoint of the driver and any passengers view, take pictures capturing a 360 degree view to show all angles of what each person may have seen prior to the incident occurring.

Legal Consultation

An ESO should consult with their qualified legal counsel and insurance professional to develop and implement policies, procedures and guidelines related to incident and near miss investigations.

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