



Guideline: Investigations

Purpose

- To support the Investigation Procedure and assist investigators with examples, definitions and tools.
- To provide a framework that focuses on learning from the issue to prevent similar occurrences in the future.
- To provide a simple set of tools that can be used effectively for routine incidents with minimal training.

Application

- Applies to all investigations arising from an incident, whether observed directly, reported by others or a complaint submitted to the organization.

Roles & Accountabilities

Designated Investigators:

- Use the Guide to help complete an effective investigation with appropriate conclusions and actions.

Guideline

What is the purpose of an investigation?

- To **learn** so that you can prevent similar occurrences in the future.
- An investigation is **not about blame and punishment.**

Do you have the skills to investigate an issue?



All leaders should develop the basic skills to investigate issues and develop/implement corrective actions. The key requirement is to keep an open mind, avoid jumping to conclusions, ask objective questions and listen carefully.



As the severity and overall impact/complexity of an issue or incident increases, the skill requirements for a thorough and accurate investigation also increases. It is important to recognize when the investigative requirements have exceeded your capabilities and it is time to get help from another, more experienced source (internal or external).

When should you not act as an investigator?



The issue is too complex for your technical and/or investigative capabilities.



You are personally involved in the issue where the investigation needs to examine your actions/leadership.



Serious incident – an outside, objective and skilled investigator is usually needed to avoid the emotion and ask the right questions required in a quality investigation.

How elaborate does the investigation need to be?



A simple issue might be investigated, and an action plan put in place in a just a few minutes.



A complex incident with serious consequences could take a significant period of time.



The investigation needs to be thorough enough to fully understand what caused the issue and what actions need to be taken to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

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Identify Facts – combine the W5 with the Five Senses to establish facts.

Five Basic Questions

1. What Happened?
2. Where did it happen?
3. When did it happen?
4. Who was involved?
5. Why did it happen?

These questions formulate the information required to report any issue.

Why is the basic investigative question that leads to the discovery of contributing factors and associated causes

Five Human Senses

1. See
2. Hear
3. Smell
4. Touch
5. Taste

Ask the basic questions in the context of what people actually saw, heard, smelled, felt or tasted. If they cannot answer within the 5 senses, it is not a fact.



Interview:



Do's

- ✓ **Emphasize the purpose of the investigation** – to determine what happened and why.
- ✓ **Interview People Individually**
- ✓ **Separate Witnesses** – details and facts of the issue can quickly become confused when witnesses start telling each other what happened and comparing notes.
- ✓ **Use various types of questions to determine facts** – do not form any conclusions: Seek the answers to Who, What, Where and When but not Why (that is the purpose of the investigation).
 - Closed Questions – yes or no answers to specific questions; watch that you don't lead.
 - Open-Ended – get the individuals to describe while avoiding the “why”.
- ✓ **Let the person talk while you listen.**
- ✓ **Ask open-ended questions that cannot simply answered “yes” or “no”**
- ✓ **Confirm their previously written statement is correct.**
- ✓ **Try to sense any underlying feelings of the individual.**
- ✓ **Make short notes or ask team member to take notes during the interview.**
- ✓ **Close on a positive note.**



Don'ts

- ✗ **Interview multiple people at the same time.**
- ✗ **Intimidate the individual**
- ✗ **Interrupt**
- ✗ **Ask accusatory or prejudicial questions**
- ✗ **Jump to conclusions**

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Gather Relevant Data



Pictures:

- Use date/time stamp feature.
- Add a ruler or similar object to establish scale on close-ups
- Avoid having people or other objects not relevant to the incident in the background
- Ensure pictures are focused, have adequate lighting and avoid unnecessary shadows.

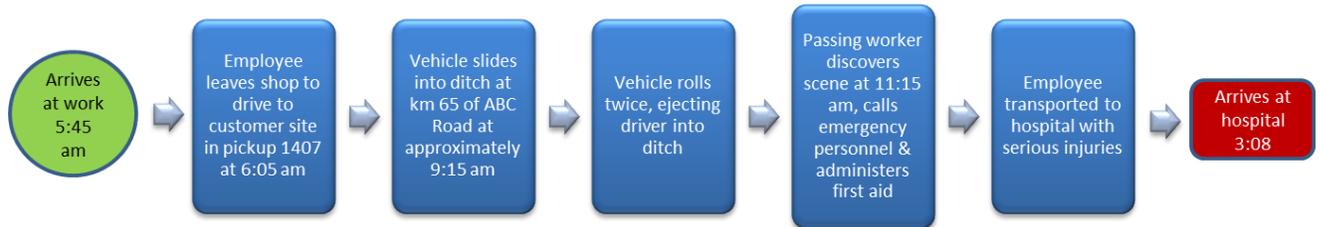


Records:

- Document: Document basic information.
- May include Game Sheets, previous written warnings/conversation notes, information package sign-offs, record of attendance at meetings/training sessions, written complaints, etc.
- Organize, label and make notations so it is clear how they relate to the investigation.

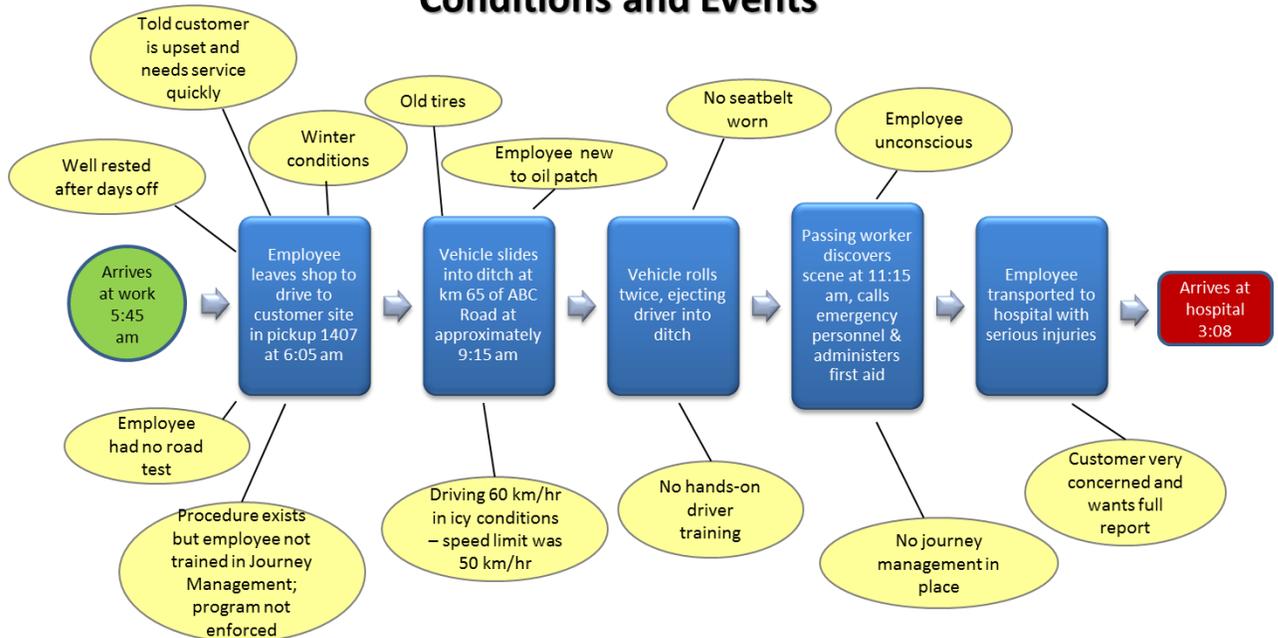
Analyze Data – here is a simple industry example to show how the process works:

Sequence of Events – factual accounting of the events that took place (what, when, where, who). It is important to start the sequence early enough and go far enough to fully understand the issue.



Conditions and Factors – by collecting evidence through interviews, records and pictures, start adding conditions and factors that may have contributed to the events. Avoid jumping to conclusions or prematurely rejecting data at this point.

Conditions and Events



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Determine Causes – once all the data is collected start looking at potential causes. This exploration may create the need for further investigation and identification of more events, conditions and factors that may have contributed. Here are some key points to consider when determining causes:

→ **Consider the Hazard Generators:**

- Equipment – appropriate for the conditions (e.g. a tent that was improperly secured in high winds)?
- Materials – storage, appropriate for job?
- People – trained, experienced, behaviors, communication?
- Environment – weather conditions, housekeeping, organization?
- Job/Team Requirements – time pressures, complexity, working with others?

→ **Consider Leadership & Supervision:**

- Clear Standards and Procedures in place?
- Participants trained and oriented to the requirements?
- Appropriate supervision and support provided?
- Expectations clear and consistently reinforced – members held accountable?
- Appropriate resources provided?

→ **Assess Conditions to determine if/how they impacted the events**

- List each of the conditions
- Use the items above to write an assessment of each of the conditions to determine if they impacted the events along with how they influenced the outcome.

→ **Develop Final List of Causes**

- Review the assessment of the conditions to identify and group trends.
- Determine the overall causes of the incident, documenting the logic behind the conclusions.

Corrective Action Plan

The purpose of Corrective Actions is to avoid future incidents and continuously improve organizational performance by implementing:

- **Short-Term Actions** – may include individual or group discussions, Team Meetings, Technical or Safety Bulletins/Alerts. The goal is to immediately communicate a problem and solutions to those who are potentially at risk.
- **Sustainable Actions** – may require:
 - Changes to Policies, Standards, Procedures and associated training
 - Organizational and leadership improvements
- **Assess the importance and priority** of the required actions.

Accountability – remember that holding someone accountable is generally a positive event, based on facts and aimed at improving performance, strengthening relationships and growing the culture.

Punishment is only appropriate when there was willful disregard – someone knowingly violating rules and demonstrating unacceptable behaviors.

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Report Writing

The level of detail required for a report will depend upon the severity and complexity of the incident, and requirements from customers or regulators. Typical headings and structure for a document may include:

- Title Page/Header
 - Incident Date, Time
 - Investigation Team (Lead and Members)
 - Report Date
- Overview
 - Concise description of the Issue/Incident
 - High level overview of conclusions
- Recommendations
 - High level review of recommendations to correct future issues
- Analysis
 - Incident/Issue description (where appropriate, incorporate pictures into text to help illustrate the issue)
 - Conditions and Events
 - Cause Analysis
- Corrective Action Plan
 - Detailed plan with actions assigned to specific individuals with expected completion dates
 - Clear description of disciplinary measures, if required, with reasoning behind the actions.
- Attachments
 - Records
 - Pictures
 - Interviews

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