



ACCIDENTS LEARN FROM NEAR MISSES

This talk discusses the importance of reporting and correcting near misses.

Material to have on hand:

Near-miss report form (if available)

Items for attendees to consider during talk:

Have you sidestepped trash or other obstacles on the floor?

Do you practice proper housekeeping in your work area?

Can you think of any close calls—or actual ones that should have been avoided—that have happened here?

TALK

When you notice a red light glowing on the dashboard of your car, you recognize it as a warning to let you know that your engine is overheating or that there's another problem.



A near accident or near miss is a warning, too. For example, when you're driving down the highway at a good clip and another car pulls out in front of you, it's necessary to hit the brakes or make a quick lane change to avoid an accident. Chances are that you'll be pretty hot under the collar at the other driver's action, but if you're smart, you won't let anger overpower your safe driving habits. You'll also make a mental note to be more alert and watch for cars approaching the highway from side roads. This could save your life next time.



A near miss in the workplace is a warning or a sign that something is wrong. Perhaps a machine isn't operating correctly, or materials aren't stacked properly, or someone has acted in an unsafe way. Close calls or near accidents on the job should also be safety precautions.

Let's consider some typical accidents that could have been avoided if the close-call warning had been noted:

- A shop worker tripped over a two-by-four and fractured an ankle.
- A secretary slipped on some trash and grabbed a metal file cabinet in an attempt to break the fall, pulling the cabinet on top of her.
- A machine operator was injured when a motorized hand truck struck the machine that he was operating.

[Use real examples from your workplace.]

It's fairly certain that the proper handling of earlier near misses could have prevented the real thing from happening in these cases. The two-by-four and trash on the floor had probably caused other employees to step aside to avoid tripping or may even have caused stumbles that didn't result in injury.

Chances are there were several, yet in all of these cases and doubtless in many others, no one heeded the warnings. Nothing was done to correct the situations, and accidents resulted.

An actual accident isn't hard to remember. You may still have the pains or scars to remind you. Someone burned as a child doesn't need a slap on the wrist to encourage caution after that burn. But as we've noted, a near miss is often forgotten, with no benefits resulting from the experience.



Student Handout

How can we turn a close call or near miss into a contribution to safety?

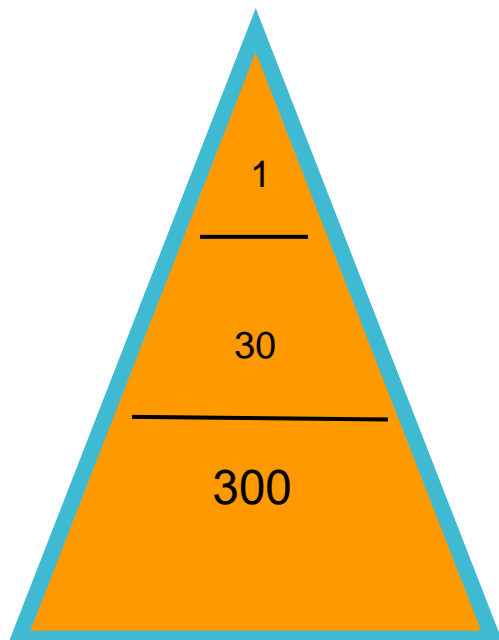
1st - recognize it as a warning.

2nd - correct the situation or remove the hazard that caused the near accident.

If it can be handled routinely, do so, but in any case, report it to your supervisor. This lets him or her plan how to keep the same situation or hazard from arising at some other time or place.

Constant safety awareness on everyone's part is the most important factor in accident prevention. It's what makes us recognize a close call as a warning. So what do you do when a stack of boxes tips over, the handle on a tool snaps, or a ladder slips and, fortunately, no one is hurt?

Every close call is a call for action. Sometimes it's something you can fix right away yourself; other times, it requires specialized attention. In either case, the close call should never be ignored and should always be reported. That way, the next "real" accident may not happen after all.



The Rule of 300

300 near misses will occur

30 minor incidents or accidents will occur

1 serious accident or injury will occur

Serious accidents arise out of the same hazards that produce minor incidents and near misses.