

Accident Review: Identifying Causes

Each and every accident needs to be reviewed to identify causes that relate to the specific problem during the Committee's Accident Review.

- While there will probably be only a few dominant causes for any one accident, there can be many contributing causes.
- After identifying all the possible contributing causes, the Committee will want to isolate the primary root cause.
 - The root cause is the singular cause that, if it had not existed, the occupational injury or illness would not have occurred or the occupational risk exposure would not have been present.
 - The Committee needs to avoid the temptation of jumping to what they suspect is the obvious root cause.
 - Identifying all of the possible contributing causes on multiple claims could result in identifying a pattern of risk that, when addressed, will yield substantial safety benefit.

When the Committee analyzes an accident for the potential causes, it is important that they "drill down" past the obvious; the goal is to identify specific causes so that specific solutions can be recommended. We can divide the potential causes into five general areas: Decision Making, Accountability, Physical and/or Mental, Facilities, Equipment, Materials, and Knowledge, Skills, Judgment.

Decision Making:

- Employee
 - made an incorrect decision
 - did not follow established expectations, policies, procedures, rules
 - did not use provided facilities, equipment, materials
 - was in a hurry
 - was encouraged to behave undesirably
 - did not report the problem
- Manager/supervisor
 - made an incorrect decision
 - improperly evaluated problem
 - created improper expectations, policies, procedures, rules
 - did not give employee authority to take preventive action
 - placed unreasonable pressures or demands on employee
 - did not provide an adequate number of employees to do the job or task
 - did not follow their own expectations, policies, procedures, rules
 - did not correct the problem

Accountability:

- Manager or supervisor:
 - did not hold employee accountable for correct performance
 - did not hold employee accountable for maintaining facilities, equipment, materials
 - was not held accountable by their superiors for taking preventive action
 - was not held accountable by their superiors for their positive and negative results
 - did not evaluate performance of employee