

Close Calls Are Urgent Calls for Action

WHAT'S AT STAKE

A close call, also known as a near miss, is an incident where no property was damaged and no personal injury sustained, but where, given a slight shift in time or position, damage and/or injury or illness easily could have occurred. Often they are treated as a lucky break and shrugged off by workers who get back to work without giving it a second thought.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Without proper evaluation into the incident, a close call can easily become an accident later. Reporting of close call/near miss incidents are imperative so that contributing factors can be identified and managed before they result in personal injury/illness or property damage. When your co-workers are hurt it is not just they who are afflicted, often their family, friends, co-workers, and others who depend on them are affected as well. This is to say nothing of the overwhelming feelings of guilt and responsibility that are associated with knowing the accident could have been avoided had the original incident been reported and examined.

EXAMPLE

A scrapyard uses a crane to lift a sheet of scrap metal 30 feet off the ground in order to move it from one side of the yard to the other. After receiving many "close call" reports of the metal falling from the crane to where other employees were working below, the supervisor worked with the crane operator to reduce the height at which the metal was raised (10 feet) thereby increasing visibility and decreasing the risk of metal falling on someone.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Compared to learning from actual injury or property loss events, close calls are zero-cost learning opportunities. In some industries, handling close calls correctly has led to a two-thirds reduction in fatal accidents. When you experience a close call, report it immediately, no matter how minor it may seem. Below are a few steps to prevent and manage close calls:

- Familiarize yourself with how to report close calls/near misses. If you have any questions, consult your supervisor.
- Check your worksite and equipment for hazards or unusual situations before each use. Notify your supervisor immediately if you see any damaged or broken machinery or equipment.
- Evaluate your work processes and practices to make sure that you are following all safety procedures and guidelines.
- If you see your fellow workers exposed to hazards or performing their jobs in an unsafe manner, talk to them about your concerns.
- Report immediately to your supervisor if you witness or experience any hazard or close call that has been previously addressed.

FINAL WORD

Close calls represent opportunities for correcting a hazard before it leads to injury or property damage. They provide valuable information on weaknesses in the operation system. It is your responsibility to report close calls immediately. You owe it to yourself, your coworkers and everyone that may depend on you to protect yourself from future accidents.

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Job Name: _____ Date: _____

Questions:

1. A close call and a near miss are the same thing.
True False
2. A close call doesn't have to be reported.
True False
3. A close call can be a warning about:
A. an unsafe condition
B. faulty or damaged equipment
C. unsafe actions
D. all of the above
4. A follow-up should be done after a close call is reported.
True False
5. An unreported close call could lead to an injury or death.
True False

Meeting Attended By:

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Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____