

ACCIDENTS, INCIDENTS & NEAR MISSES

Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council is committed to providing safe working environments and conditions for its employees, partners, contractors, volunteers, visitors and members of the public. Preventing incidents at work is integral in avoiding the costs of illness and accidents. However sometimes accidents and incidents (including physical and verbal abuse) do occur and it is essential that they are **reported** and properly **investigated** so that causes are identified and control measures put in place to prevent a recurrence.

Applicable Legislation

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended)
Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981

Purpose – it's aims and objectives

This procedure will advise you how to report and investigate accidents, incidents and near misses.

Scope

With the exception of Oxfordshire Fire Rescue Service, which has its own procedures and systems for reporting and investigation, all Directorates, services, and maintained schools should follow this procedure for reporting and investigating accidents and incidents, which may be complemented by operational or local arrangements.

Partners, contractors and service providers will have their own arrangements for reporting and investigation accidents and incidents; however consideration should be given to joint investigation where accidents and incidents involve activities where there is joint management responsibility for service users, premises, etc.

This procedure covers the three steps:

1. Reporting and Escalation
2. Investigation
3. Learning from the outcomes and preventing a recurrence

1. Reporting and Escalation

After an incident, accident or near miss occurs it should be recorded and reported at the earliest opportunity. In most cases these only need to be reported internally. However, there are certain types of incidents and accidents that need to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – these are required under RIDDOR: visit the HSE website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reportable-incidents.htm> for details.

Reports on the OCC reporting system are categorized as:

Incident/Accident and over 7 day injury	An event arising out of or in connection with work affecting employees, volunteers, service users, pupils, contractors, visitors members of the public, e.g. an injury requiring first aid at work.
Dangerous Occurrence/Near Miss	Dangerous Occurrences are specifically listed in the online report form e.g. Accidental release of any substance which may damage health (asbestos). Near Miss is an occurrence that did not result in injury, but clearly could have done e.g. highway engineer almost struck by moving vehicle but managed to move out of the way in time.
Work Related Ill Health and Reportable Diseases	This applies to employees and volunteers only and includes any ill health caused by, or in connection with work e.g. occupational dermatitis and cancers.
Physical and/or Verbal Abuse	This applies to employees and volunteers only and includes incidents resulting in: without injury: e.g. anti-social behaviour, damage to property, spitting, threatened and actual physical abuse. with injury: e.g. physical assault, punch, kick, bite, cut. In cases where a work colleague has abused you and you wish to report the incident – please refer to HR in the first instance.

Reports are given a severity classification as:

Minor	A slight or superficial injury / little pain / does not require medical attention beyond basic local first aid / does not result in absence from work (if employee). Any near miss or dangerous occurrence with potential to cause minor injury. Any incident of physical abuse where a minor injury has been sustained or where the employee wishes to report verbal abuse.
Moderate	An incident/accident that requires first aid and/or medical attention / that prevents an employee from continuing their work. Any near miss or dangerous occurrence with potential for moderate injury but is not listed in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). Any incident of physical abuse where a moderate injury has been sustained or where the employee wishes to report severe verbal abuse.
Serious	An incident/accident that causes death or results in the injured person being taken to hospital for treatment AND arose out of, or in connection with a work activity. All RIDDOR reportable events. Any incident of physical abuse where a serious injury has been sustained or where the employee wishes to report serious verbal abuse e.g. threat to personal safety.

All employees are able to report an incident, accident or near miss using the online reporting system.

Logging in to the Health and Safety Reporting System

For **Directorates** go to the Home Page of the [Intranet](#).

For **Schools** you will need to access the system through the [Schools Website](#).

2. Investigation

Why?

The purpose of the investigation is to establish how and why things went wrong and to identify the immediate, root and underlying causes of the accident/incident with a view to determining and implementing control measures to prevent further recurrences. Accidents, incidents and near misses should be investigated but the extent and depth should be based on the nature, severity or potential consequences.

When?

Any investigation should take place as soon as possible after the incident has occurred.

Who?

In most circumstances, responsibility for undertaking an investigation lies with the manager responsible for the activity and/or premises. Depending on the nature and severity of the accident or incident and the complexity of the investigation it may be appropriate for others to lead or assist the investigation i.e. senior management, Health and Safety Team, persons with specialist competence, union or employee H&S Reps.

How?

Most investigations can be undertaken by completing the investigation section of the online reporting form.

Further detailed guidance on how to undertake and document large and complex investigations can be found in the HSE's guidance for investigating accidents and incidents: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsg245.pdf>.

When identifying improvements and risk control measures it is important to establish the immediate, underlying and root causes.

Immediate Causes

These are aspects of the incident/accident which directly influenced the outcome (injury) and are often referred to as "direct causes". They are the features of an accident/incident which immediately contributed to harm or abuse being caused.

E.g. An employee receives an electric shock from a faulty piece of equipment.
A client was unhappy with the response or service given.

Underlying Causes

These aspects of the accident/incident are effectively contributory breaches which in themselves did not cause harm but made a significant contribution to the accident/incident occurring.

E.g. Poor maintenance of the equipment could be an underlying cause. The client's needs were not adequately assessed.

Root Causes

Generally these are aspects of our safety management performance which have in some way failed. You may have identified in Immediate and Underlying causes that there have

been individual, equipment or structural failings which directly or indirectly contributed to the incident/accident.

E.g. Failure to supervise and monitor a programme of maintenance by a competent contractor. Inadequate processes in place for gathering appropriate information or detail.

By addressing the root cause you effectively remove the key reason why the circumstances were allowed to develop for the incident/accident to occur. By only addressing Immediate and Underlying causes you allow the fundamental management deficiencies to remain and therefore make recurrence more likely.

3. Learning from the outcomes and preventing a recurrence

It is important that we learn from any accident, incident or near miss and put in place actions to prevent a recurrence.

Following an investigation an action plan should be implemented to:

- Include risk control measures in the short and long term.
- Review and update any risk assessments and safe working procedures.
- Communicate any lessons learnt not only with immediate service colleagues but also with other parts of the organisation where similar risks exist.

Once the investigation has been undertaken, documents, reports etc. should be retained by the responsible manager and uploaded into the online report form. Copies of any investigation report together with the action plan should be sent to the manager responsible and the Health and Safety Team. Copies may also be requested by senior management, Insurance Team, Legal, Union and employee H&S Reps, enforcing authorities e.g. Health and Safety Executive, Environmental Health, Police.

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For further information and advice:

	email and web addresses	
Health and Safety Team	healthandsafetyhelp@oxfordshire.gov.uk	Helpdesk 03300 240849
Health and Safety Executive	www.hse.gov.uk INDG453 Reporting accidents and incidents at work RIDDOR 2013 HSG245 Investigating accidents and incidents	0151 951 4000