EMS STAFF SAFETY NEWSLETTER

Near Miss Incidents
KEY POINTS

- Incidents occur every day at the workplace that could result in a serious injury or damage.

- A near-miss program may help prevent future incidents.

- One problem that companies must overcome is employee's fear of being blamed after reporting a near miss.

- Employers need to make the process of reporting a near miss as easy as possible.

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Healthcare workers suffer 50% of all assaults.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Report highlights escalating violence at healthcare facilities

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New research suggests that the rate of workplace violence at healthcare facilities is high and the severity is intensifying. Learn more about the results of a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO).

While healthcare facilities are perceived as a place to get well, the reality is that many workers face an elevated risk of injury from violence, mostly originating from patients. The GAO was asked by Congress to examine the prevalence of job violence in healthcare workplaces and review efforts by OSHA to address the problem.

GAO characterized the rate of workplace violence at some psychiatric facilities as "extreme," and said many injuries can be prevented or mitigated through violence prevention programs. Getting injured on the job should not be a part of anyone's job description," the report concluded.

Among findings and recommendations:

- Job violence is a serious concern for 15 million healthcare workers in the United States.
- In 2013, more than 153,000 workers reported assaults at healthcare sites. And there were nearly 25,000 cases of violence that caused a reportable days-away-from-work injury. Nearly six percent of psychiatric aides employed in state facilities suffer this type of reportable injury each year.
- OSHA should improve training for inspectors on developing citations for workplace violence hazards.
- OSHA should assess the results of its current efforts to determine whether additional action, including development of a standard, is needed. The full report is at www.gao.gov/assets/680/675858.pdf.

What is a Near Miss?

A Near Miss is an unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness, or damage – but had the potential to do so.

Only a fortunate break in the chain of events prevented an injury, fatality or damage; in other words, a miss that was nonetheless very near.

A faulty process or management system invariably is the root cause for the increased risk that leads to the near miss and should be the focus of improvement.

Other familiar terms for these events are a "close call," a "narrow escape," or in the case of moving objects, "near collision" or a "near hit."

How Do Near Miss Reporting Prevent Future Incidents?

Near miss incidents often precede loss producing events but may be overlooked as there was no harm (no injury, damage or loss).

History has shown repeatedly that most loss producing events (incidents), both serious and catastrophic, were preceded by warnings or near miss incidents. Recognizing and reporting near miss incidents can significantly improve worker safety and enhance an organization's safety culture.

What are Best Practices in Establishing a Near Miss Reporting System?

- The reporting system needs to be non-punitive and, if desired by the person reporting, anonymous.

- Investigate near miss incidents to identify the root cause and the weaknesses in the system that resulted in the circumstances that led to the near miss.

- Use investigation results to improve safety systems, hazard control, risk reduction, and lessons learned. All of these represent opportunity for training, feedback on performance and a commitment to continuous improvement.

- Near miss reporting is vitally important to preventing serious, fatal and catastrophic incidents that are less frequent but far more harmful than other incidents.

- Capture sufficient data for statistical analysis, correlation studies, trending, and performance measurement (improvement over baseline).

- Provide convenient opportunity for "employee participation," a basic component of a successful safety management system.

- Create an open culture whereby everyone shares and contributes in a responsible manner to their own safety and that of their fellow workers.

- Include training for new employees as a part of their orientation.

- Celebrate the success and value of the near miss reporting process with all employees!