

Incident Reporting – Quick Guide

What is incident reporting?

Incident reporting is the process of documenting details about a safety incident or near miss and notifying the appropriate person in your business (e.g. a manager or safety officer).

When an incident or near miss occurs, it's essential to gather appropriate information so a meaningful investigation can take place. Appropriate information could include:

Who	Who (people—including third parties—and equipment) was involved and advised?
What	What happened and what task was being done?
Where	Where did it happen?
When	When did it happen?
Were	Were there any witnesses or other contributing factors?

Why report incidents and near misses?

Reporting safety incidents and near misses will enable you to:

- understand the events that led up to the incident or near miss
- develop solutions based on what you learn from an event
- improve how work is performed
- prevent or reduce the likelihood of the same or similar incidents occurring in the future.

Why are incidents and near misses not reported?

While there are many reasons why employees and third parties don't report safety incidents and near misses, common reasons include the following:

- the reporting form is too hard or complicated to fill in
- employees believe it may not be acted upon
- the incident is perceived as insignificant and not worth reporting
- fear of being blamed.

How can you report an incident?

Complete the incident report: The person completing the incident report should be the person who was involved in the incident or experienced the near miss. If this isn't possible, a supervisor or someone responsible for the person, area or activity should complete the incident report.

Gather supporting evidence: Ideally, incident reports should also include supporting evidence, such as photographs and diagrams. Video footage of the incident site can be taken with something as simple as your smartphone. This is particularly important when the evidence will no longer exist, such as when equipment is moved or the site is cleaned up.

Submit the report: Once the incident report has been completed and evidence has been gathered, the report should be submitted to the appropriate person in the business.

Notifiable incidents

Depending on the severity of the incident, the Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulator may need to be notified. In the case of a 'notifiable incident' as defined under WHS legislation, an WHS Inspector will advise whether an inspection is required or the site can be cleared.

Notifiable incidents include:

- the death of a person
- a serious injury to or illness of a person
- a dangerous incident.

A full explanation of the terms 'incident notification' and 'notifiable incident' can be found on your local WHS regulator's website.

There may also be a requirement to notify your local Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for certain environmental incidents. A full explanation of this requirement can be found on your local EPA's website.

Other considerations

Information from incident reports will also enable you to consider incident trends for action (i.e. when certain types of incidents keep occurring or similar causes of incidents continue to arise).

Incidents that result in injury, damage or loss could also require insurance or workers compensation involvement. Gathering accurate and timely information to prove and legitimise a claim is essential.

The image shows two versions of an 'Incident Report' form. The left form is a simplified version with sections for: 1.4 Diagram of the incident, 1.5 Immediate containment actions, and 1.6 Incident statement acknowledgement. The right form is a more detailed version with sections for: Section 1 - Incident details (including 1.1 Brief incident information with fields for date, time, location, involved persons, and witnesses), 1.2 Company property/equipment damage (with fields for extent of damage, vehicle/equipment used, and tractor/trailer details), and 1.3 Third parties involved (with fields for name and contact information, nature and extent of injuries, and extent of damage to other property/equipment).