

Administrative Procedures Manual	Administrative Procedure 160
	Appendix D
	Accident Investigation
	APPROVED: March 2025
Page 1 of 4	AMENDED/REVIEWED: August 2025
LEGAL REFERENCE:	Section 11, 52, 53, 196, 197, 222 Education Act Occupational Health and Safety Act Worker's Compensation Act Occupational Health and Safety Code Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

Background

School and department administrators shall ensure work-related incidents including near misses are investigated following this procedure. This procedure can also be used to investigate student-related incidents and injuries. While all incidents should be investigated, priority should be given to the most severe incidents including those that require medical attention or had the potential to cause serious injury, illness, or property damage.

The purpose of an incident investigation is to identify the direct, indirect and root causes of the incident so that control measures or corrective actions can be implemented to prevent the incident from occurring again. By eliminating one or more causes, incidents can be prevented.

Definitions:

Incident: An unplanned/unwanted event that results in harm or the potential for harm (i.e., injury, illness, property damage, near misses).

Near Miss Incident: An unplanned/ unwanted event with *the potential* to result in injury, illness, damage to equipment or property, or other losses. Often called a “close call.”

FOIP: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation

Incident Investigation: is a process to determine the direct and indirect causes of an incident and identify controls to prevent future incidents. The Division supports the sharing of incident investigation findings within the Division for learning purposes, within the framework of FOIP.

Reportable Serious Injury or Incident: is an incident or injury of a certain type that must be reported by phone to the Alberta Government as soon as possible as per Part 7 of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act. This includes any time an employee is hospitalized because of a workplace incident. See [AB OHS Reportable Incidents](#).

HZ: Hour Zero. The Division’s selected web-based incident reporting and safety training system.

Direct Cause is the immediate cause of the injury or illness. Usually, the result of unsafe acts or conditions. What caused the injury to happen? (i.e., slip/fall hazards, operating equipment without authority, failure to warn of or secure hazards, improper use, or operation of equipment, using inappropriate equipment, improper lifting, / placement / loading / position for tasks, horseplay, poor housekeeping, etc. The direct cause is usually a result of one or more unsafe acts or conditions.

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Indirect Cause (*symptoms*) the unsafe acts or unsafe conditions that contributed to the direct cause of the incident. This includes personal or environmental work factors. (i.e., consider task/activity person was doing, materials/equipment used, behaviours and physical environment. Examples of indirect causes:

- Distraction from mental stress / physical stress
- Lack of knowledge or skill or improper motivation (rushing, annoyance)
- Not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e., improper footwear)
- Inadequate work standards, inadequate tools/ maintenance wear and tear, abuse, and misuse
- Defective equipment or inadequate maintenance
- Poor weather conditions

Root Cause is the underlying, system-related reason an incident occurred that identifies one or more correctable system failures. It is what may have led to the existence of direct and indirect causes. Correcting only indirect causes (symptoms) may not fully eliminate the problem. Root causes are usually conditions that have existed for some time and can usually be determined by asking a series of “why” questions.

- Why was the person not wearing protective equipment?
- Why was the lighting poor?
- Why is the equipment not being maintained?

Examples of root causes may include inadequate health and safety program management or compliance, building or equipment design issues, lack of procedures or training or issues related to leadership and workplace culture.

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Example Incident Investigation

An employee arrives for work while it is still dark and slips and falls in an icy parking lot. They are wearing summer sandals and carrying a heavy box of supplies from their vehicle. The employee suffers from a broken ankle and is transported to hospital by ambulance. An investigation is conducted by viewing the incident site and interviewing the injured employee and witnesses. What are the possible direct, indirect and root causes of this incident? What are the possible corrective actions?

<i>Direct Cause</i>	<i>Ice on the parking lot, worker walked on it and slipped and fell</i>
<i>Indirect Causes</i>	<i>Improper footwear, icy parking lot, poor lighting, carrying a heavy box, the worker was rushing because their feet were cold.</i>
<i>Root Cause</i>	<i>Non enforcement or communication of hazard controls (i.e., footwear policy); poor lot maintenance and lighting design; mechanical aids unavailable</i>
<i>Corrective Action</i>	<i>Wear footwear appropriate to conditions Reinforce footwear policy with all employees Park closer to building when unloading Use cart or dolly or ask for assistance Review snow removal contract Install additional lighting</i>

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Procedure:

1. Provide first aid/ medical attention

- 1.1. Ensure the injured person(s) receive adequate first aid or medical attention as soon as possible.

2. Survey the scene of the incident / Secure if it meets OHS reporting requirements.

- 2.1. Survey the scene for hazards and if safe to do so, correct any identified hazards.
- 2.2. If the incident results in an OHS Reportable Serious Injury or Incident, isolate the area where the incident took place. Leave the area as is and try not to disturb the scene.

3. Report the incident

- 3.1. Report staff work-related incidents on the HZ Employee Accident Report. Reporting is required as soon as possible verbally, and within twenty-four (24) hours of the incident into PSW. If the incident involves a work-related injury to staff covered by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and is likely to result in further medical treatment or time lost from work beyond the day of the incident, it must also be reported to the WCB. Reference: AP 160, Health and Safety of Students [Appendix C – Accident Injury Reporting](#).
- 3.2. OHS Reportable incidents include:
 - An injury, illness in which there is reason to believe the worker has been or will be admitted to a hospital beyond treatment in an emergency room or urgent care facility.
 - An unplanned or uncontrolled explosion or fire or flood causes a serious injury or illness or that has potential for causing a serious injury or illness.
 - Collapse of a crane, derrick, or hoist
 - Collapse or failure of any component of a building or structure necessary for the structural integrity of the building or structure.
 - Injuries that result in death of a worker.
- 3.3. If necessary, the Safety Coordinator will notify the appropriate government officials as required by Part 7 of the OHS Act and assist site administration with the incident investigation.

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4. Conduct the investigation

4.1. An incident investigation answers:

- What happened?
- How did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- What needs to be corrected?

4.2. The site supervisor/administrator in consultation with the employee(s) involved must ensure an incident investigation is completed using the HZ Employee Incident Investigation Report. Ensure that direct, indirect and root causes of the incident are examined. Most incidents will have at least one direct and indirect cause.

4.3. Correcting only the indirect causes of an incident may eliminate a symptom of a problem, but not the problem itself. Take pictures, measurements, review documents and interview witnesses, as necessary.

4.4. If needed, the Safety Coordinator may be contacted for assistance with the investigation. For incidents involving work refusals, reference: AP 160, Health and Safety of Students and Staff [Appendix E, Refusal of Work](#).

4.5. Take corrective action and file the report

4.5.1. The site administrator reviews and signs the completed investigation report and ensures that recommendations and corrective actions arising from the investigation are implemented and documented on the incident investigation report.

5. Communicate the results of the incident investigation to employees

5.1. Maintain confidentiality of employees involved in the incident.