

OHS INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Interviews with injured workers and other witnesses often serve as the investigation team's main source of information regarding the incident.

It is a legislative requirement for the employer to make every reasonable effort to ensure all witnesses to the incident are made available for interview and any other persons whose presence might be necessary for a proper investigation of the incident.

The investigation team typically consists of the manager and Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHSC) worker representative. At the beginning of the interview, the investigation team should reassure interviewees that **the investigation's main purpose is to find facts, not fault**. The investigation team must **listen attentively, remain objective** and **not draw any conclusions during the interview**. The investigation team should create a safe and supportive environment that encourages the interviewee to share all information necessary to prevent recurrence of a similar incident.

PRO TIP: If a BCNU member is being interviewed by the employer as part of an OHS incident investigation, please ensure a BCNU JOHSC worker representative is present for that interview.

The investigation team should consider the following related to interviews:

- **Interview all witnesses.** Consider all individuals who may have information about the incident and follow up to ensure all witnesses are interviewed.

PRO TIP: There may be other parties who were not physically present for the incident but may have relevant information that would support the investigation process (e.g., supervisor tasked with providing instructions to workers, violence prevention trainers, other workers who do similar tasks, etc.). Ensure those individuals are also interviewed to inform the investigation!

- **Conduct interviews as soon as possible.** Memory about an event is most reliable directly after the event occurs. For this reason, interviews with witnesses should be conducted immediately after the incident if possible. Being a witness to an incident can be a traumatic experience and conducting an interview directly after an incident may trigger a trauma response from the witness.

PRO TIP: Always check in with the witness regarding their wellbeing after the incident. Confirm the employer has offered them critical incident stress debriefing immediately. Be sure to confirm with the witness that they are feeling well enough to be interviewed and let them know they will be supported if they need to stop the interview at any point.

- **Clarify the purpose of the interview.** The investigation team should remind the interviewee that the goal of the interview is to get an accurate account of the events leading up to the incident so system level factors can be identified.
- **Ask interviewee to describe what happened in their own words.** Rather than completing their sentences for them, be sure to provide the time and space to describe what happened from their perspective.
- **Take great notes.** After letting the interviewee know that notes will be taken during the interview, a member of the investigation team can proceed with taking detailed notes. Confirm notes are accurate.

- **Fill in the gaps.** Once the description of the incident is provided by the interviewee, the investigation team should ask open ended questions to fill in the gaps. For example:
 - Where were you when the incident happened?
 - What were you doing when the incident happened?
 - What did you see or hear?
 - What were the conditions (e.g., lighting, noise, overcapacity) at the time?
 - What was/were the injured worker(s) doing at the time of the incident?
 - What do you think might have contributed to the incident?
 - What was the client's day like before the incident?
 - What time of day did the incident occur?
 - How often is the unit short staffed?
 - Did anything unusual happen that day?
- **Ask the interviewee for suggestions.** Front line workers have valuable ideas regarding what could have prevented the incident from occurring. Be sure to include these suggestions for corrective actions in the final investigation report.
- **Exchange contact information with the interviewee** so they can contact the investigation team later if they remember additional details and **thank them** for their participation.
- **Keep affected workers and interviewees informed** regarding the progress and outcome of the investigation. It is important for front line workers to know how their participation in the investigation process led to a safer workplace.

“ There is no place for worker blame in an OHS incident investigation. Interviews are meant to find the facts, not fault.