Draft for Public Consultation

Public Consultation period begins on 08 Sept 2015 and ends 05 Oct 2015 (4 weeks)

Members of the public are invited to submit comments using the consultation form provided, after which the contents of this guide are subject to change.

This draft should NOT be regarded or used as a final guidance document issued by WSH Council. Feedback will be incorporated and copy-editing will be undertaken prior to publication.
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What is a near miss?

A cook assistant was pulled aside in time from scalding hot liquid by a heroine chef with fast reflexes. The same chef saved the day by preventing slips, and catching falling and flying objects. Miraculously, no one was hurt in this fictional scenario from the webisode “Ying Yang Twins”. In this webisode, the employees had experienced multiple near miss situations due to unsafe acts or conditions; all of which could have easily led to serious injuries.

What constitutes a near miss? The Singapore Standard defines it as an unplanned event that did not result in any injury, illness or damage but had the potential to do so. When the sequence of events that could have led to an accident is interrupted by chance, it prevents any harm or loss from taking place.

You can find the “Ying Yang Twins” webisode on Youtube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_cnDm1KH6c

Why should we track near miss?

Near misses happen across all industries and all companies regardless of the scale of operation. Every company can tap on the benefits of near miss reporting to augment their journey to WSH excellence. These benefits are detailed in the same chapter but ultimately, the main desired outcome is to avoid future accidents from taking place.

Proactive monitoring

Some companies may use near misses as a leading indicator of their WSH performance. Near misses are akin to the symptoms of an underlying problem at the workplace. It precedes and surfaces repeatedly before an accident finally occur. Hence it is recognised as a leading indicator which, amongst other safety performance indicators, you should take advantage of.
Companies that are typically reactive in nature would only respond and take corrective action after the occurrence of an accident. By tracking near misses, they can take on a proactive stance; to analyse and intervene before the accident happens, and thereby effectively enhancing their WSH capabilities.

**Damage-free lesson**

Near miss events do not result in personal harm or incur property damage. By tracking, analysing and managing reported near misses, companies are leveraging on these zero-cost lessons. Conversely, choosing to take action only after sustaining injuries or substantial damages creates a major hurdle. Every accident brings about a devastating loss, with massive expenses incurred, operations halted and additional resources diverted to preventing recurrences. Therefore it would make better business sense to deal with near misses to uncover and arrest hazards at the onset before they escalate to outcomes that are beyond control.

**Multiple opportunities for preventive action**

Let us look at the accident pyramid adapted from Heinrich in Figure 1. The pyramid estimates that: for every fatal workplace accident, 3000 incidents did not cause any injuries. In other words, you are presented with 3000 opportunities to stop that fatality from taking place. Companies are not expected to and may not be able to ideally capture all the 3000 near miss events that occurred, given the volume of reports to manage. Just turning in and acting on 1% of that volume, would present companies with 30 opportunities to take corrective or preventive action.

![Figure 1: Accident pyramid](image-url)
Culture building

Near miss reporting can be viewed as a tool for engaging and empowering employees at different levels throughout your organisation. The exercise of near miss reporting can help companies to improve their communication channels and environment. This can help foster an open WSH culture where everyone shares and contributes in a responsible manner toward the safety and health for themselves and also their fellow workers.

What are the key components in near miss reporting?

Companies need not necessarily set up a dedicated system for near miss reporting. You can achieve the same outcome by extending the existing reporting criteria to include near misses into your safety management system. On the other hand, companies that are new to a reporting culture can refer to the description of the key components in near miss reporting (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Five components in near miss reporting](image)

Identify – Employees need to understand how to properly identify and recognise near miss events. This is crucial as it will determine the quality of the reports coming in.

- One way to train them is to involve them in the job safety analysis or risk assessment, which will highlight the potential hazards in their work areas.
- Reports that are turned in may also be used for fine-tuning your company’s understanding or definition of a near miss event.
- Additionally, it would help to choose a broader and all-inclusive definition to make identifying easier for your staff.

Report – A complicated procedure and lengthy report requirement would discourage the staff. Ensure that the process for reporting near misses is easy to understand and hassle-free. The form for reporting should be kept as simple as possible and easy to use. Dates, location, and general description of the incident are some key information to include in the form. Refer to Annex A – Template for Near Miss Report.

Investigate – When investigating, we should not only look at what had happened, but also probe further into what could have happened. Evaluate the possible consequences of the reported near misses and rank them by their potential severity. Your intervention efforts can be prioritised accordingly. If major injuries or fatalities are likely, a full investigation is strongly encouraged. If the potential consequences were less severe, the hazard can be
simply abated and communicated to everyone. Guidance on conducting investigations can be found in WSH Guidelines – Investigating Workplace Incidents for SMEs³.

**Intervene** – The affected department is recommended to manage the factor(s) that are causing the near misses as they will be most familiar with the premise settings. Interventions can take place before and after an investigation. Before an investigation is launched, encourage your employees to take action to temporarily mitigate the danger until permanent solutions can be implemented. After investigations have concluded, the findings can be used to determine reasonable measures to improve your safety and health system, and hazard control.

**Review** – The data collected from near misses are leading indicators of your company’s WSH performance. It should be used concurrently with other WSH indicators in your evaluation. The review can be done on a daily, weekly and monthly basis for trends and improvement actions. This step allows you to create opportunities for training, feedback on performance and continuous improvement.
How do we encourage near miss reporting?

Employees’ participation is vital for the success of near miss reporting. It is therefore important to educate them on the reason why near miss reporting is necessary, the crucial role that they play, and the process of reporting. These must be well communicated and positively reinforced to your employees across all levels. Here are some good practices to carry out in your organisation to boost the behaviour of near miss reporting:

**No-blame culture**

Reassure your employees that the information being collected will be used to learn and improve – not to blame or punish. This would help encourage more forthcoming reporting. To improve the quality of the report submissions, you can consider anonymous reporting, as a person would be more comfortable with sharing information when his identity can be kept confidential. However, this could hinder information gathering during investigations. Hence, it is important to earn your employees’ confidence and trust when it comes to reporting. A determining factor in this system’s success is fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable coming forward without any fear of repercussion.

**Empower employee**

Employees at all levels should be empowered to spot and fix hazards at their own discretion before near misses escalate into more severe consequences. Usually, employees hesitate to make immediate rectification because they are not sure if it is their responsibility to do so. Establish clear responsibilities and accountabilities of the employees for incident reporting and intervention. Encourage them to contribute in providing the solutions together with the affected department.

**Communication**

Communicating is key in promoting near miss reporting to encourage employee participation. Regular and consistent communication will help to sustain and rejuvenate the interest to report and coupling open communication with a no-blame policy will let the employees feel that their suggestions are valued. It is more than just highlighting the benefits of near miss; it is also about sharing near misses that the employees could relate to. The sharing can be carried out by supervisors or top management to illustrate their commitment to manage WSH for the wellbeing of the employees. Additionally, it can further reinforce the positive message by providing a channel for providing recognition for achievements in near miss reporting.

**Create a culture of reporting**

To establish a strong reporting culture, you must act on every opportunity to identify and control hazards, reduce risk and prevent harmful incidents. Create a policy and procedure
that is communicated to all employees with the backing of senior management. The support from middle management such as managers and supervisors is vital as they work closely with the workers. They are the role model for their subordinates and hence they should set a good example to propagate the value of near miss reporting. Besides integrating near miss reporting into the job description of the employees, you may also consider including near miss reporting training for new employees as a part of their orientation.

To cultivate the habit of submitting near miss reports or to have some substantial numbers to analyse trends, you may be tempted to set quotas. Although quota-setting sends a clearer message for establishing expectations on a new reporting programme, continuing this requirement could dilute the quality of the information you receive. If made obligatory, employees would submit reports for the sake of meeting the quota, and not out of genuine concern for safety. The reverse could also happen; employees that have met their quota for reporting near miss may choose not to report any further and some near misses would not be captured.

**Easy to understand and use**

A complicated or confusing process will only discourage employees from reporting. Therefore it is important to ensure that the near miss reporting process is easy to understand and follow. The form should be kept concise and the questions straightforward, so employees can quickly learn how to use them. Lastly, the forms should also be made easily accessible for all employees so they may record and submit a report readily.

**Feedback**

Feedback about actions taken in response to reported near misses should be provided for your staff. It can be shared at company meetings and project sites via platforms such as toolbox meetings. Feedback motivates employees to do near miss reporting as they can see that their suggestions are valued and help shape their workplace. In the event that you need more time to rectify the condition or alternative is required, feedback will also reassure employees that their contributions are not being overlooked.

**Incentives**

A possible avenue to promoting and encouraging near miss reporting is to offer incentives to employees. An example of a good incentive is one that recognizes the participation of workers in the recognition and reporting of hazards. For instance, giving due credit to employees who had submitted reports that helped avert potentially disastrous accidents. Acknowledging contribution from your staff helps to nurture a stronger reporting culture and better engage employees in purposeful WSH activities. An example of a poor incentive is one that measures performance by placing focus on statistics and setting numerical targets. Doing so stunts the organic growth of the reporting culture because the driving force behind reporting is borne out of meeting set targets and managerial expectations.
References

1. SS 506: 2009 – Singapore Standard on Occupational Safety and Health Management by Spring Singapore

2. Workplace Safety and Health Guidelines - Investigating Workplace Incidents for SMEs, by WSH Council


4. Reporting Near Misses – Why are they important and how can safety professionals get employees involved? by Safety + Health

5. Near Miss Reporting, by Occupational Safety & Health Administration
Annex A – Template for Near Miss Report

You may choose to adopt and make changes to this template to better suit your near miss reporting needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department:</th>
<th>Report reference number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Date of incident:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of incident:</th>
<th>Time of incident:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please check the boxes for the type of probable cause (you may select more than one).

- [ ] Unsafe act  
  *An activity that is carried out in a way that can cause injury or property damage.*

- [ ] Unsafe environment  
  *A condition in the work premise that can cause injury or property damage.*

- [ ] Unsafe equipment  
  *A fault with the work equipment that can cause injury or property damage.*

Description of the incident:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the incident:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Your suggestion for improvement (optional):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your suggestion for improvement (optional):</th>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Name (optional):  
Contact (optional):  
Date of reporting:  

To be filled in by Management

Potential severity:

Corrective action taken:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corrective action taken:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Name (of management):  
Contact:  
Date completed:  


Annex B – Definitions

For the purpose of this Guide, the following definitions apply:

Incident: Work-related event(s) in which an injury or ill-health (regardless of severity) or fatality or property damaged or losses occurred, or could have occurred. [SS 506 : Part 3 : 2013]

Accident: An incident that has resulted in injury or ill-health or fatality. [SS 506 : Part 1 : 2009]

Near miss: An unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness or damage but had the potential to do so. [SS 506 : Part 3 : 2013]

Hazard: Source or situation or act with a potential for harm in terms of human injury or ill health, damage to property, damage to the environment, or a combination of these. [SS 506 : Part 3 : 2013]

Major injury: Non-fatal injuries which are more severe in nature, defined using a combination of factors, including the nature of injury, part of the body injured, incident type and duration of medical leave. These include:
- amputation
- blindness
- deafness
- paralysis
- crushing, fractures and dislocations: head, back, chest and abdomen, neck, hip and pelvis
- exposure to electric current
- acute illness requiring medical treatment or loss of consciousness from exposure to chemical and/or biological agents
- asphyxia/drowning
- hypothermia
- burns with more than 20 days of medical leave
- concussion with more than 20 days of medical leave

Minor injury: Any injury or ill-health resulting in the following:
  a. Hospitalisation > 24 hours
  b. Medical leave > 3 cumulative calendar days (for the same diagnosis)
  c. Diagnosed with occupational disease