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Conducting an Effective Incident Investigation

The goal of an accurate and thorough incident investigation is not to place blame, but to determine the true cause of the incident and make changes that reduce the chances of similar incidents occurring in the future. Make sure your investigation includes each of the phases below to assure that your team has every opportunity to uncover root causes:

- **Responding to the Incident**
 - Check the scene for hazards to yourself and others.
 - If you can do so safely, control hazards or remove people from the hazards.
 - Respond to medical needs: if necessary, summon help by calling emergency medical services (EMS) and/or provide first aid to the level you are trained.
 - Secure the area if necessary to prevent further injury or disruption of evidence.
 - Contact the appropriate personnel, such as supervisors, management, or emergency responders, after injured parties are medically stable.
 - Start preserving evidence that may be needed for the investigation, including photographing or isolating evidence that may not be able to be removed from the scene.
- **Gathering Information**
 - Include both management and employees in the investigation. Multiple perspectives are invaluable.
 - Make sure that the investigation team includes or has access to technical expertise in safety, engineering, operations, or any other subjects that might be helpful.
 - Focus on finding causes for the issue rather than assigning blame.
 - Collect as much data as possible by interviewing personnel involved in the incident (including witnesses) and documenting the entire incident site (i.e., with photographs or video). The more information you have, the easier it will be to see the big picture.
- **Analyzing the Data**
 - Look for root causes. A root cause is a factor that underlies other contributing causes and that could eliminate recurrence of the problem if it is addressed.
 - Rather than just focusing on the actions of the people involved in the incident, try to consider the organization as a whole and whether there are any weaknesses in the current procedures that may have contributed to the incident.
 - Using multiple methods of data analysis, such as Ishikawa (fishbone) diagrams or the Why Method, can help uncover root causes that may have been missed using only one.
- **Determining/Implementing Corrective Actions**
 - Be specific in your instructions for what each action entails and how it should be implemented.
 - Assign responsible parties to ensure that the corrective actions are completed and a time frame for completion.
 - Keep your recommendations constructive and objective.
 - Clearly point out instances where human error is a cause, but avoid recommending disciplinary actions, which should be handled by Human Resources.
Outline a follow-up plan to assure that actions are implemented correctly and work as planned.

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For more information and the opportunity for Q&A, join us for the August session of Safety Academy. [Register online](#) to reserve your seat.



More Than \$5B Headed to Texas for Flood Control

Almost a year after Hurricane Harvey dumped historic rains on Texas, the state will receive more than \$5 billion for a range of flood control projects, repairs and studies, the Trump administration announced on July 5. The bulk of the funding – nearly \$4 billion – will go toward the construction of nearly 27 miles of coastal levees in southern Orange County and to shore up nearly 30 miles of existing coastal levees in Port Arthur and

Freeport. That project is a significant component of a larger coastal protection system that local officials and scientists have long envisioned for the state to safeguard it from deadly storm surge during hurricanes. “The billions allocated to Texas today is welcome news as we continue to rebuild in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey,” Gov. Greg Abbott said in a statement. “This funding will go a long way toward future-proofing Texas against another hurricane and strengthening our infrastructure to withstand dangerous flooding.”

Cybersecurity for Business

It feels as if data breaches, even of seemingly secure networks, are a daily occurrence. While advancements in information technology have made it easier than ever to run a business, organizational and customer data may be at risk unless proper cybersecurity measures are in place. Consider these cybersecurity best practices:



- Conduct an initial audit to determine potential exposures for your organization as well as to establish an action plan for identifying and implementing proper controls.
- Establish written policies detailing your organization's cybersecurity safeguards, including topics such as password protocols, guidelines for internet use, customer data control, and penalties for policy violations.
- Keep hardware and software up-to-date to decrease risk from the latest malware or other security threats.
- Secure your internet connection, including implementing a firewall and assuring that Wi-Fi signals are secure and encrypted.
- Manage employee access to the internet or customer data by creating separate, password-protected user IDs for all employees and only granting employees access to systems needed to perform their job.
- Keep systems used for payments separate from other potentially less secure systems.
- Work with banks to make sure that the payment systems and services in place are trusted and secure.
- Make regular backups of vital data, including internal documents and customer information.
- Store data backups offsite, either at a remote location or in the cloud.
- Implement physical security measures, such as keeping network equipment, servers, and other hardware in locked or restricted-access areas.
- Secure mobile devices by requiring password protection and installing trusted security and anti-fraud systems.
- Require employees to change their passwords at regular intervals, and consider implementing multi-factor authentication systems.

This is not an all-inclusive list, but it's a great place to start evaluating your business for cyber vulnerabilities.

Evacuation Drills

In an emergency situation, evacuating employees out of a building poses unique challenges. Appropriate exits, emergency lighting, communication systems, alarms and sprinkler systems are critical for employee safety. Drills are a critical component to ensure that emergency procedures are understood and followed by all occupants.

- Ensure your emergency action plan addresses all emergency situations. Know when to evacuate, and when not to.
- Identify and train employees who will be responsible for sounding the alarms and organizing the evacuation drills.
- Perform regularly scheduled evacuation drills, make needed improvements to the plan, and document these events.
- All employees shall follow evacuation drill procedures professionally and evaluate for improvement.
- Exit workstations in a calm and orderly manner. Use the evacuation map to determine the closest and safest route out of the building. Do not stay behind.
- Determine a primary and secondary means of evacuation from the building so that, in the event of a real evacuation, you will know another way out if the first choice is blocked.
- Identify the locations of workstations and equipment/furniture on the floor to make low visibility escape easier.
- Recognize the sounds and signals of the emergency alarms. Report any malfunctioning alarms or emergency equipment immediately.
- Perform a head count at the designated meeting location and ensure all personnel have safely exited the building.
- Only re-enter when it is reported by the person in command that is safe to do so.

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