

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Near Misses

We often discuss accidents and how to prevent them. But what about incidents where something almost happens or does happen, however, there's no real damage to property and nobody actually gets hurt ... this is called a "near miss". Something bad could have easily happened. People may be tempted to write off near misses as "no harm, no foul" or "a miss is as good as a mile" situations. Often these incidents – while they may leave you shaken, laughing or with a "good story" to tell – often are not reported.

No harm done, right? Wrong.

By not reporting near misses, employees also are not doing anything to help prevent more, potentially serious incidents from occurring in the future. Near misses occur every day in every industry, and most serious, catastrophic and loss-producing incidents are preceded by these near miss warnings.

Reporting near misses is everyone's responsibility.

All employees should encourage the reporting of near misses, as we all want to go home injury free at the end of each work day.

- Workers – Tell your supervisor when something "almost happens".
- Supervisors – Encourage reporting of near misses. Don't punish employees for honesty about incidents, but ask for input on preventing similar situations in the future. Train employees on lessons learned from near misses & take action to prevent re-occurrence.
- Managers – Support supervisor's steps toward making a safe work environment. Encourage having equipment maintained, and financially support request for personal protective equipment and proper tools for the job tasks.

Examples of near misses:

1. A worker nearly being struck by equipment and says, "Wow, that was close!"
2. Running a chainsaw and pants get cut without touching leg.
3. Materials come off trailer or out of pickup bed landing in the roadside ditch.
4. Grinding wheel comes apart & flies across the shop.

Examples of questions that should be asked and discussion topics (for each of the above near miss situations):

1. Was worker visible to operator?
Did the equipment operate as designed?
Were proper procedures followed with the equipment's use?
2. Why were saw chaps not being worn?
Were chaps available?
Had employee been trained on safe use?
3. Were materials secured initially?
Were proper chains/straps used?
Was load checked periodically during travel?
4. Was a guard in place on the tool?
Was the wheel being used as intended?
Was a quality wheel installed initially?

Safety is dependent on the support of all employees. If it's not supported by all levels of the organization and positively reinforced at all levels, then it's not going to be effective. The success of near miss reporting is a direct reflection of the entire team's commitment to safety.

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Sources:

<https://www.bccsa.ca/Toolbox-Talks-.html>
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<https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/tools-resources/near-miss-reporting>