Accident Investigation

General Purpose of Accident Investigation:
To determine:
- How employees are injured;
- Why injuries happen; and
- What can be done to prevent similar injuries.

Goals of Accident Investigation:
- To identify fundamental causes of accidents;
- To identify weaknesses within management systems, equipment, people, and the environment that permitted the accident to occur;
- To suggest measures to prevent recurrence; and
- To document facts for record-keeping and defense purposes.

Benefits of Accident Investigation:
- Serves to compel supervisors and managers to address employee injuries;
- Helps managers to understand the hazards present within their areas of responsibility;
- Identifies weaknesses in the company’s cost reduction efforts and suggests cost effective remedies for such weaknesses;
- Demonstrates to employees that management takes injuries seriously; and
- Serves to reduce the number of fraudulent claims.

Essential Do’s and Don’ts:
- Complete accident investigation promptly to ensure that the physical conditions remain unchanged;
- Involve the immediate supervisor because he or she is the most familiar with the conditions existent where the accident occurred;
- Because the supervisors are too close to the problems, they should not conduct the accident investigation alone;
- Develop an accident investigation team to include at least the:
  - Injured employee’s immediate supervisor;
  - Immediate supervisor’s boss;
  - Other employees who could contribute to the process; and
  - The injured employee.

Steps for Performing an Accident Investigation:
- Ensure that the injured employee receives proper medical care.
- Interview the injured employee as soon as possible. (Do not assign blame.)
- Ask open ended questions to obtain as much information as possible.
- Interview witnesses separately.
- Evaluate the scene. Take photographs or videotape the scene.
- Reconstruct the accident in your mind chronologically, going through each step that led to the accident.
- Identify the fundamental cause of the accident and determine how it might have been avoided.
- Consider multiple causes.
- Take corrective action to prevent additional injuries.
- Follow-up on measures to ensure the measures have been completed and then to assess the effectiveness of the corrective action.