

# What to do after an accident

October 9, 2024 | AWC Member Expo



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**Why are you here  
and what do you  
hope to learn?**

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## Learning objectives

- Become familiar with what the organization needs to be doing post-accident
- Know how to help your teams and workers be prepared for what comes after an accident
- Learn the basics around accident investigations and reports
- Be convinced of the importance of the corrective work

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## What is an accident

An unplanned, unexpected, and undesigned (not purposefully caused) event which occurs suddenly or over time, and causes:

- Injury
- Decrease if value of resources
- Increase in liabilities

Events which are not deliberately caused, and which are not inevitable.

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## Potential post-accident activity goals

- Information flow (accident form completion, supervisor review)
- Mandatory reporting (if required)
- Abatement
- Policy review and revision
- Employee training and communication

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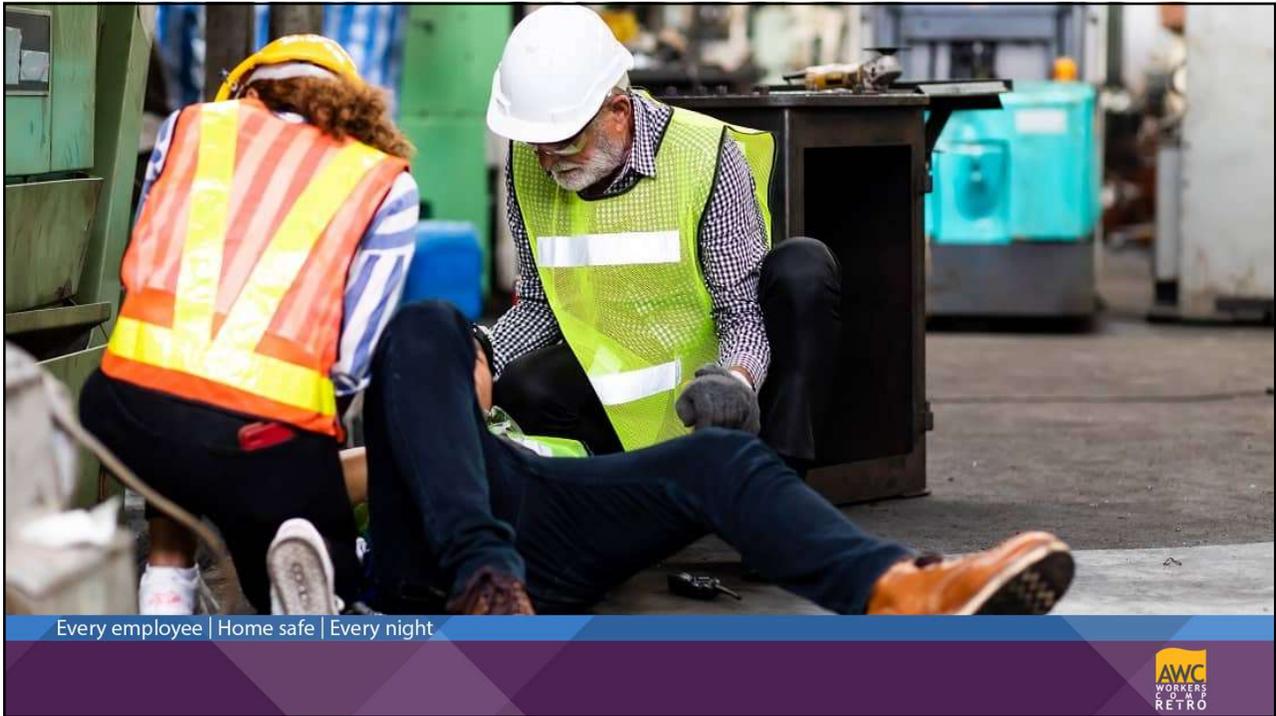
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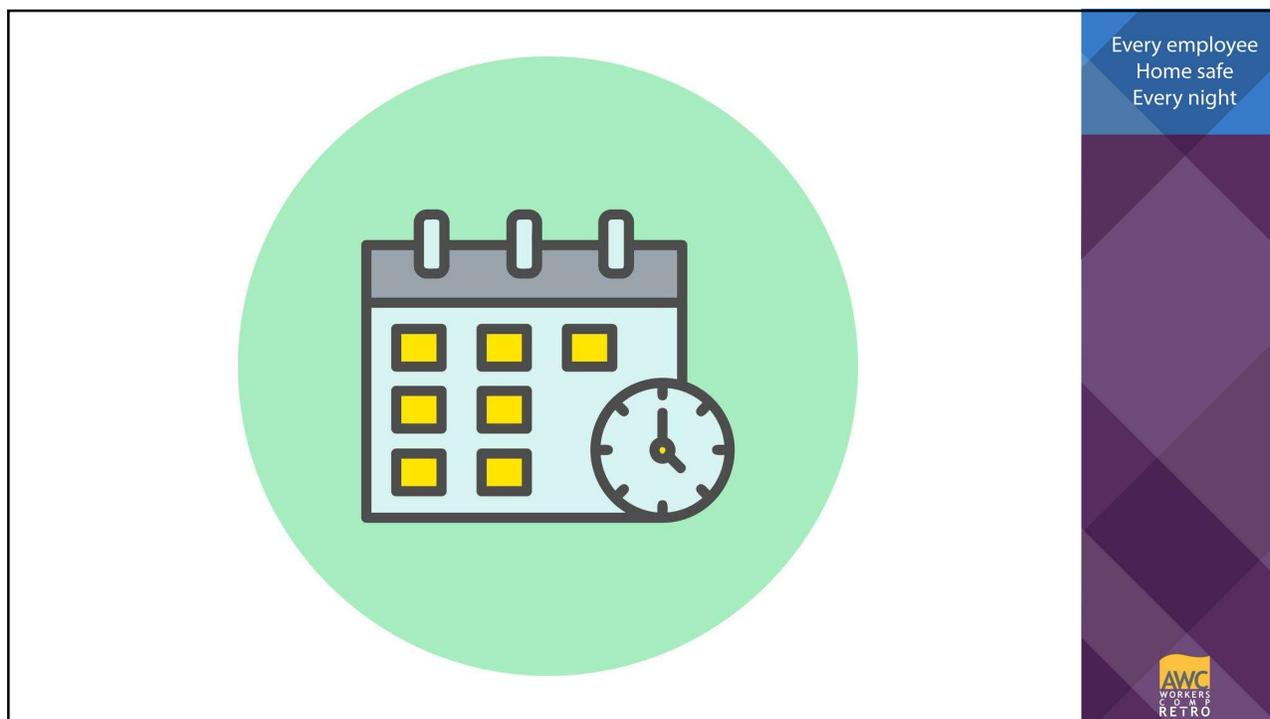
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# What are your default post-accident actions?

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## Immediate post-event actions

- Ensure medical attention and treatment is received
- Secure continuous hazards
- Evaluate needs of co-workers/witnesses of accident
- Determine reporting requirements

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## Secondary post-event actions

- Have worker fill out accident report
- Determine if an internal investigation is warranted
- Find out if L&I will be sending an investigation team, prepare if coming out

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## Tertiary post-event actions

- Safety committee and management review and determinations
- Production of accident investigation report
- Abatement determinations and follow-through
- Policy updates and employee training / re-training

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## Helping your staff be ready

- Staff should be trained on what they can expect post-accident
- Reminders in communications help – they will not do this very often
- Small, portable resources
- Walk the talk regarding how you treat workers involved in accidents

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# Accident Reports versus Accident Investigations

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## Knowledge is power

At its heart, a reporting system is an instrument to move information. Critical information needs to be collected and distributed to key staff who have roles in the safety program.



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## When to initiate accident investigations

Each organization will need to choose thresholds that trigger post-accident investigations

General rule: not all accidents require a full investigation

Variables to consider are magnitude of outcome, visibility, and variance from standard practice or expectation

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## Potential identifying language

“Any incident that results, or has the potential to result, in a major loss such as injury, illness, property damage, fire, theft, and production delays will be investigated promptly.”

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## Identifying investigation scope and purpose

Scope and purpose should be pre-identified and standard for the organization

Avoid allegations of reprisals and retaliation for being injured at work

Blame

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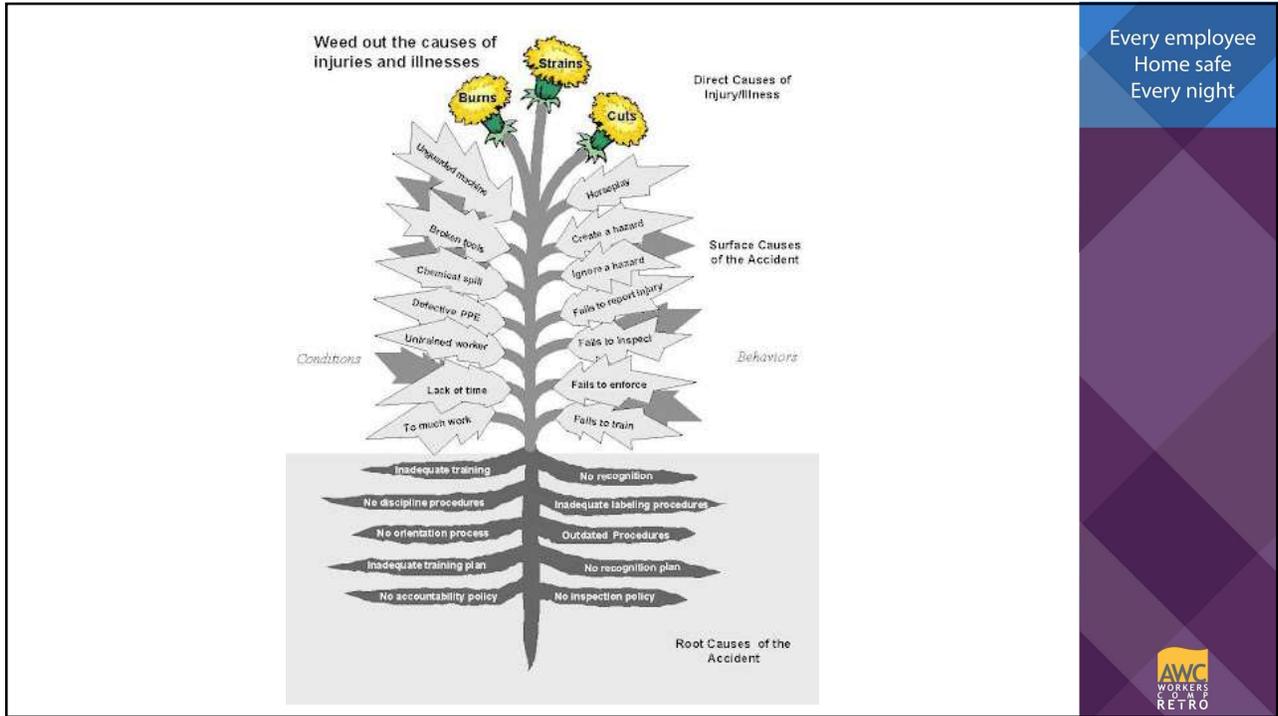
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**Why do we stop  
at the  
superficial?**

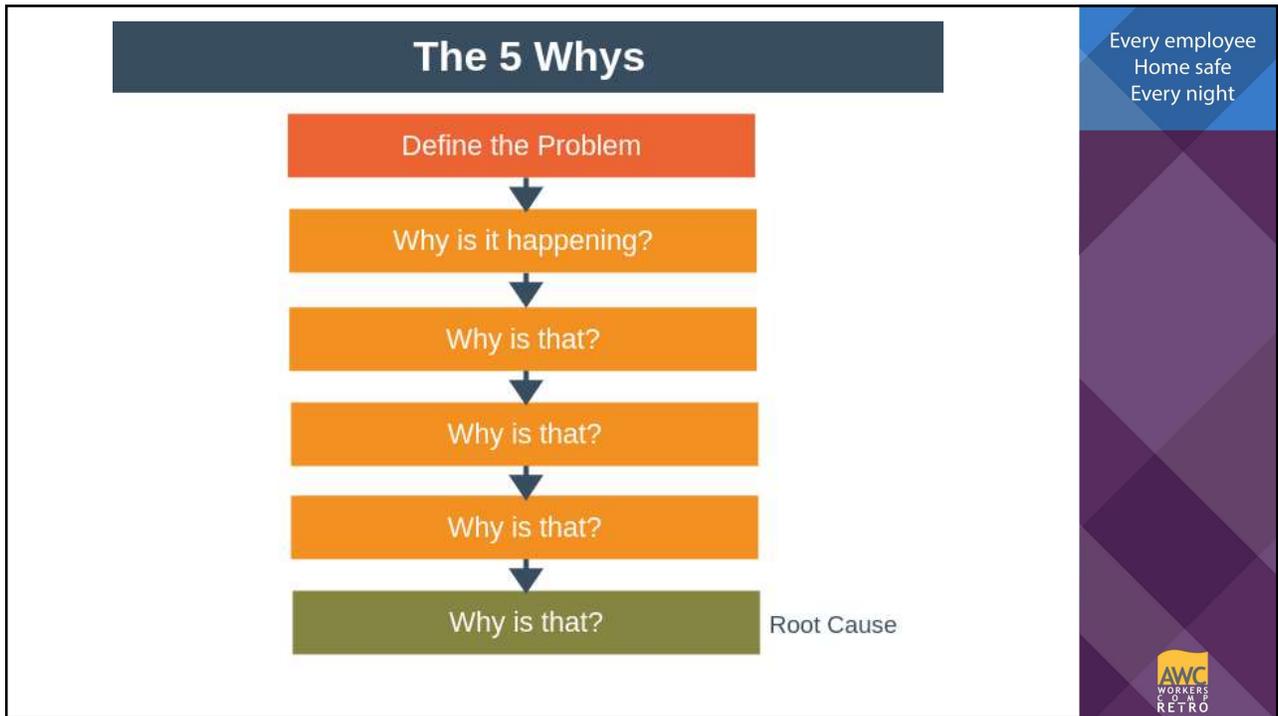
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## Asking questions

The investigator should be clear about what information is important, and this should inform what questions are asked

Good questions are open-ended

Be judgement-free when questioning witnesses and involved parties

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## Contributing factor considerations

- Human behavior
- Environment
- Design
- Systems and procedures

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## Human behavior

- Common to all accidents
- Should not be limited to the person involved in the incident



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## Environment

- Weather (humidity, temperature)
- Vapors, fumes, and dust
- Light
- Animals and wildlife



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## Design

- Workplace layout
- Design of tools and equipment
- Maintenance



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## Systems and procedures

- Lack of implemented systems and procedures for staff, or they are inappropriate
- Training and review
- Housekeeping



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## Determine corrective actions

The investigation should make recommendations based on key contributing factors and underlying causes.

Do we need:

- Retraining
- Update to hazard assessment or SOPs
- New or repaired equipment
- Anything else

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# What if you can't afford the identified fix?

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## Producing a report

Accident investigation reports should include:

- Description of incident and injuries
- Sequence of events and causation
- Pertinent facts discovered during investigation
- Conclusion of the investigator
- Corrective recommendations and fixes

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## Now the hard part

Implementing fixes and closing communication loops is where the real beneficial work happen

Individuals should be assigned accountability for identified fixes and updates

Timelines should be given, and there should be communication or follow-up with affected workgroups

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# Scenario Practice

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## Scenario questions

1. Would you initiate an investigation
2. What questions would you ask of:
  - a. The injured worker
  - b. Witnesses
  - c. The supervisor
3. What questions would you have about potential contributing factors?

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## Wrapping up

- Establish a post-accident protocol; who does what
- Train workers on what they should do after an accident and provide reminders
- Have investigation triggers, practices, and report expectations
- Let investigations lead to improvements and learning

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