Ideagen
Solutions for regulated industries

Everything you need to know about

EHS Incident Reporting

Near Miss

Injury/Illness

Property Damage

Environmental

Vehicle Accidents

General Liability

Root Cause Analysis

Incident Investigation

Contents

01 Introduction

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 5,190 fatal and 2.6 million non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses occurred in the United States in 2021. Combined, these incidents resulted in 70 million lost workdays, and The National Safety Council estimates that they had an economic cost of 167 billion dollars. These statistics show that workplace incidents affect not only the injured employees but also the organizations.

Every workplace is susceptible to occupational hazards and risks that can lead to damages, injuries, and fatalities. While incidents may not always be avoidable, it is crucial to document and report all necessary information. Incident reports facilitate structured communication with key stakeholders and enable organizations to analyze trends and identify underlying causes for proactive mitigation.

Incident reporting is a critical component of an organization's incident management system, and EHS leaders must have a strong understanding of how it works. This paper will cover everything you need to know about incident reporting, including its definition, importance, what incidents should be recorded, and strategies to encourage incident reporting. Additionally, it will provide insights into compliance with US regulations and overall best practices.

> *The true cost to the nation, employers, and individuals of work-related deaths and injuries are much greater than the cost of workers' compensation insurance alone.*
>
> *- National Safety Council*
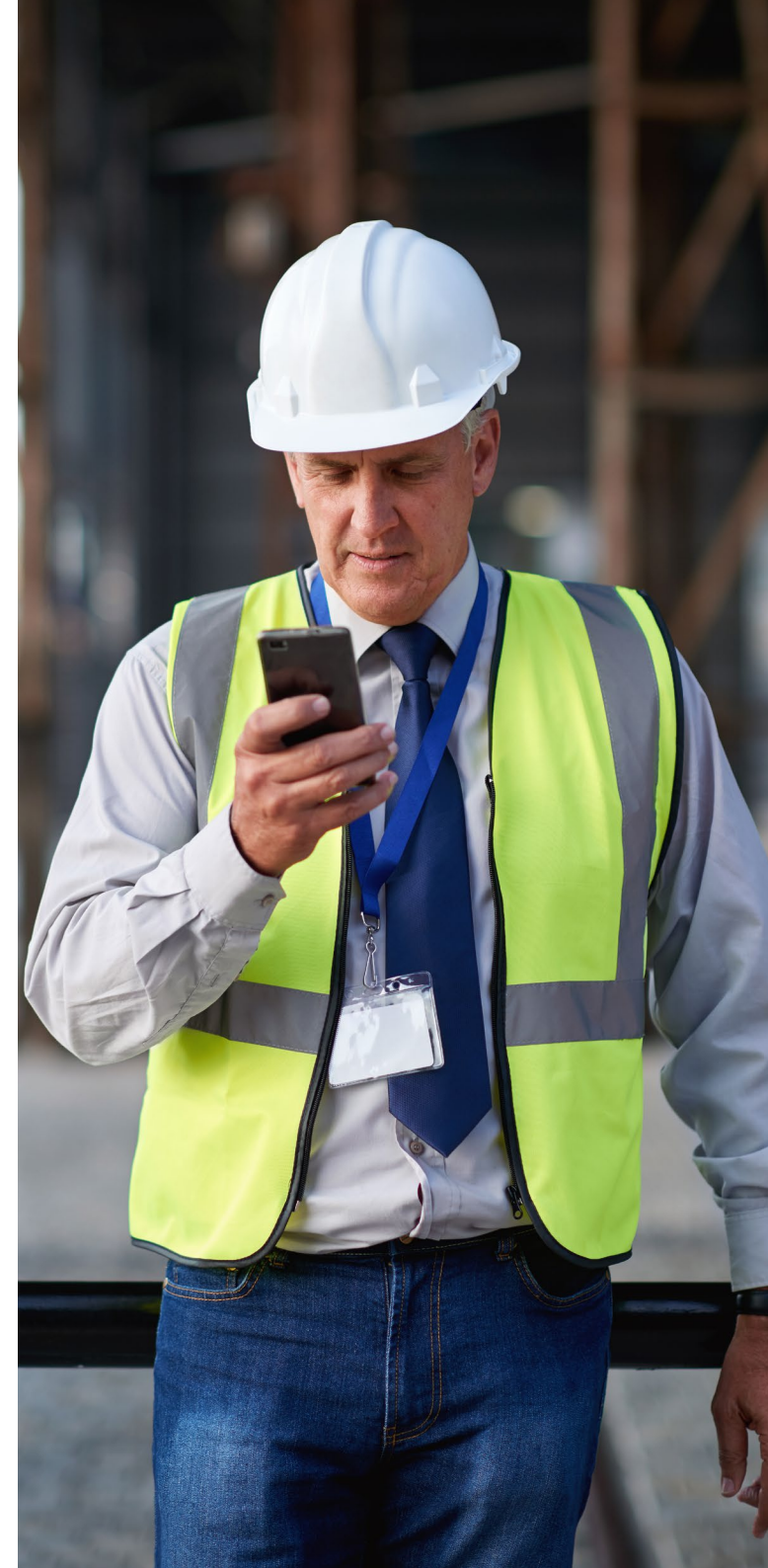
02   What is incident reporting?

Incident reporting is the process of documenting and sharing information about a workplace incident, including injuries, near misses, equipment or property damage, and environmental spills or releases.

When an incident occurs, it should be promptly reported to a designated individual or team. The report should provide detailed information such as the time, location, and nature of the incident. This information is then used to investigate the cause of the incident and develop a plan to prevent future occurrences. Incident reports can also be useful for legal action or insurance claims.

An incident report can be recorded by the staff involved in the incident or by a department head or safety manager on their behalf.

03 Why is incident reporting important?

Here are the top reasons why incident reporting is crucial for organizations:

- ⊘ **Identify trends and prevent future problems:** Tracking incidents helps identify underlying patterns that may indicate larger issues. Analyzing accidents in a specific factory area, for example, can reveal safety hazards that require attention.

- ⊘ **Support insurance claims and legal action:** Medical records and incident details can be used to support insurance claims when workplace injuries occur.

- ⊘ **Ensure compliance and avoid non-compliance issues:** Certain industries have legal requirements for reporting specific incidents. Failure to report such occurrences can result in fines and actions for non-compliance.

- ⊘ **Improve the organization's health and safety culture:** An effective incident management program demonstrates that reports are taken seriously and used to enhance overall safety. This encourages employees to report injuries, near-misses, and potential hazards.

04   What incidents should you record?

Not all incidents need to be recorded, but it is important to understand which ones require immediate recording. Generally, incidents that cause or have the potential to cause harm to people, the environment, or the organization should be reported. These incidents include:

Injury and illness

Work-related injuries and illnesses are common incidents that should be recorded. OSHA requires establishments with more than 10 employees to keep a record of serious workplace injuries or illnesses. However, certain low-risk industries such as shoe stores, florists, and legal services are exempt from this reporting requirement.

Employers are required to notify OSHA in the event of an employee's death while on the job or if they experience a work-related hospitalization, eye loss, or amputation. Fatalities should be reported within 8 hours, while amputations, eye losses, or inpatient hospitalizations must be reported within 24 hours. It's important to note that minor injuries requiring only first aid treatment do not need to be reported.
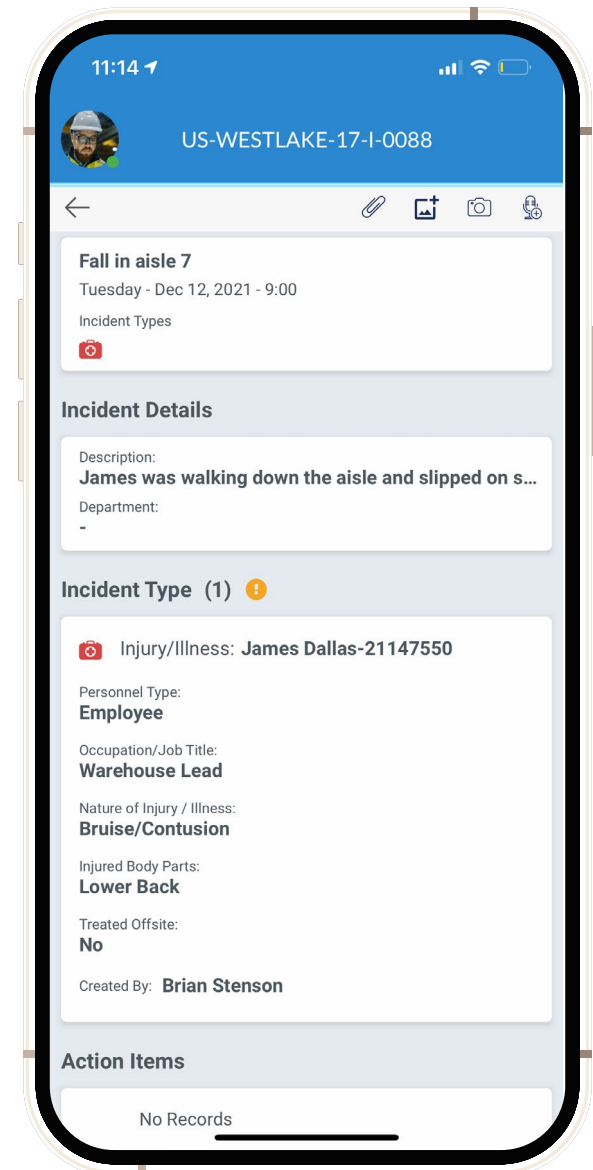
Motor vehicle incidents

Injuries resulting from motor vehicle accidents should be reported. Damage to vehicles or other property does not have specific reporting requirements, but insurance companies may require a report. Vehicle incidents are subject to the reporting rules of the Department of Transportation (DOT) when involving a commercial vehicle or driver. Failing to report an accident or leaving the scene may require filing a report according to the state or local motor vehicle regulations. Additionally, your insurance company may also require you to file a report. Gathering crucial information about the vehicle, driver, injuries, damages, etc., can facilitate the sharing of necessary details with all relevant parties.

Environmental incidents

Environmental incidents cover spills and releases. Generally, various federal, state, and local laws regulate the reporting of such incidents, depending on the specific hazardous material involved, the quantity released or spilled, and whether the incident occurred on land, in the air, or in water. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes reporting requirements for oil spills and various other hazardous substances and recommends that such incidents be reported to the National Response Center.

Property damage

Although property damage incidents do not have specific reporting requirements, severe damage with the potential to impact people or the environment may necessitate reporting for regulatory purposes.

Insurance companies often have reporting requirements for property damage incidents.

Near miss

Near misses are incidents where not harm occurred but could have. There are no regulatory requirements for recording near misses, but capturing these events is valuable to help proactively identify and prevent potential incidents.

General liability

General liability incidents often arise from events of a general nature, such as product damage. In many cases, there is no requirement to report these incidents as they do not fall under any specific regulatory framework. Incidents that do not fit into the previous five categories can be classified as general liability incidents.

05 What should you include in an incident report?

When filing an incident report, it's important to include detailed information. The more information provided, the easier it will be to investigate the incident and prevent recurrence.

Some essential details to include in an incident report are:

- ☑ Name, job title, and department of the person involved in the incident

- ☑ Description of the incident

- ☑ Injury, damage, or fatality details

- ☑ Name, job title, and department of the person filing the report (if different from the person involved in the incident)

- ☑ Details of the immediate response by the organization

- ☑ Relevant photos or videos

- ☑ Name and contact information of any witnesses

- ☑ List of any safety hazards present at the time of the incident

06 What happens after an incident is reported?

After reporting an incident, the next step is to investigate its cause and implement Corrective and Preventive Actions (CAPAs) to prevent its recurrence. OSHA provides a four-step approach to incident investigations, as outlined below:

1. Preserve/document the scene

Preserve the scene to prevent tampering and document all relevant details about the incident.

2. Collect information

Gather incident information through interviews, document reviews, etc., to determine contributing factors.

3. Determine root causes

The root cause(s) of an incident refer to the underlying reasons why it occurred. These causes can include system or design failures, operational errors, or inadequate employee training, among others. Determining the root cause(s) of an incident is crucial for preventing its recurrence. To achieve better results, OSHA and EPA recommend employers utilize an investigative technique known as Root Cause Analysis (RCA). When conducting RCA, it is important to consider all the 'why,' 'how,' and 'what' questions in order to uncover the root cause(s) of the incident.

> OSHA's Process Safety Management (PSM) or EPA's Risk Management Program (RMP) standards require employers to begin incident investigations within 48 hours of the incident reporting.
>
> *Source: OSHA and EPA*

4. Implement corrective actions

Once the root cause(s) of the incident have been identified, the next crucial step is to implement corrective actions. It is generally understood that an incident investigation cannot be considered complete without the implementation of these corrective measures.

Corrective actions encompass program improvements that senior management should adopt. It is important to note that if the root cause(s) are not uncovered, the corrective actions will have limited preventive value, and the incident is likely to recur.

To enhance efficiency, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a part of the CDC, provides a hierarchy of controls that can aid in implementing practical and effective corrective actions. The most effective approach is elimination, which involves physically removing the hazard. On the other hand, the least effective method is relying solely on personal protective equipment (PPE) to safeguard employees.

Always document the incident investigation process and the resulting corrective actions as evidence of the business's commitment to compliance.
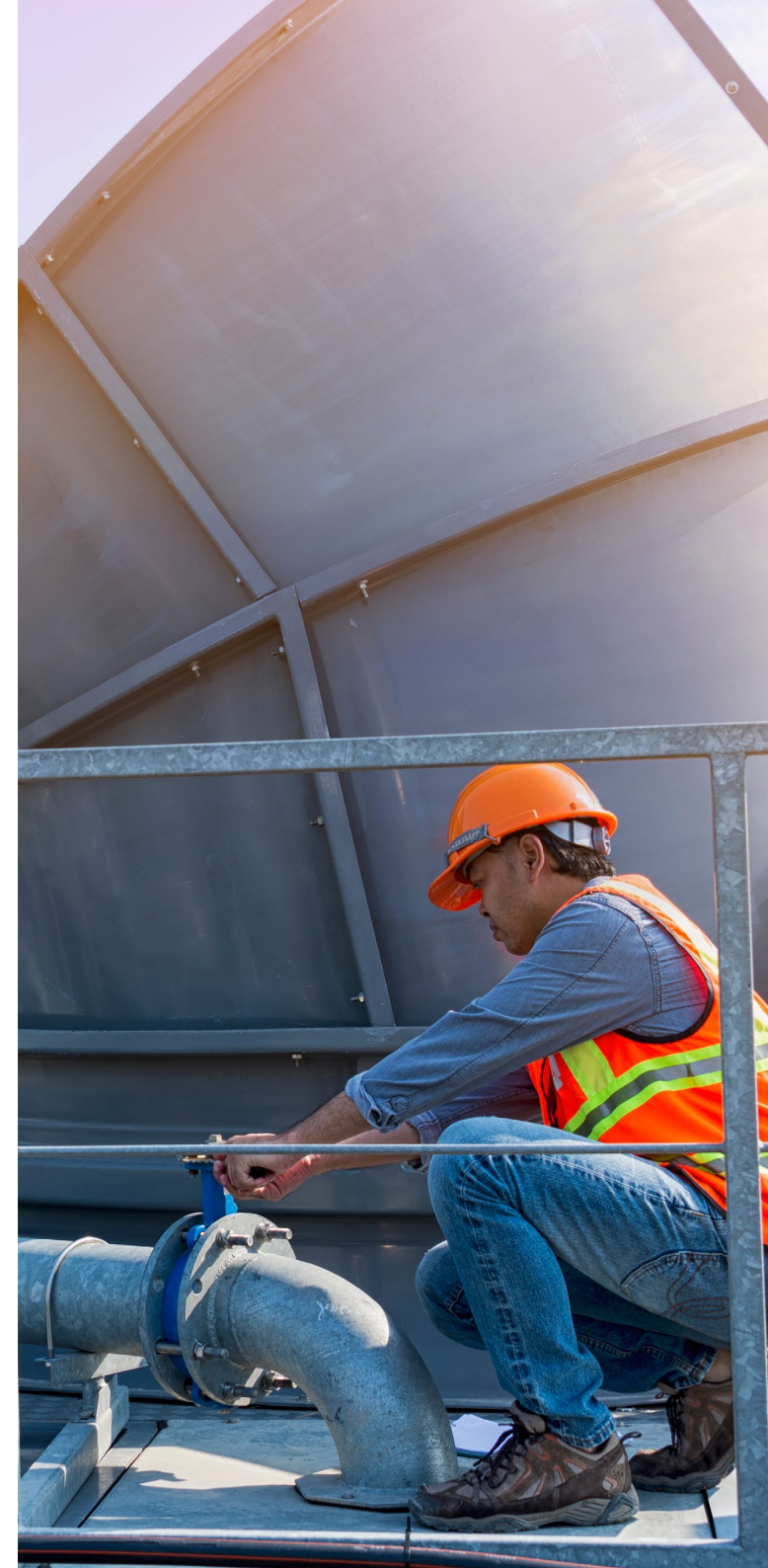
07 How can you improve your organization's incident reporting process?

Organizations must have an effective incident reporting process to ensure employees safety and safeguard property and equipment. To enhance your organization's incident reporting process and make it more effective, consider the following practices:

- Encourage employees to report all EHS incidents, no matter how minor, and incentivize timely reporting.

- Provide multiple reporting channels (online, mobile app, kiosks near workstations, etc.) for easy accessibility.

- Ensure timely action is taken on all reports.

- Train employees on how to fill out incident reports.

- Periodically review your organization's incident reporting procedures to identify areas for improvement.

" Employers should implement an incentive program that rewards workers for identifying unsafe conditions in the workplace.

– OSHA "

08 Leveraging technology for EHS incidents management

An effective incident management program requires a comprehensive EHS Incident Management solution coupled with advanced analytics capabilities to streamline and standardize the end-to-end process (incident reporting, investigation, CAPAs management, etc.) and meet ever-growing regulatory requirements. The following are a few advantages of Ideagen EHS's Incident Management solution.

⊙ **Completely capture incident details**
Report, track and manage comprehensive incident details to facilitate thorough incident investigations.

⊙ **Proactively mitigate risk**
Record and analyze near-misses to proactively identify and prevent potential incidents.

⊙ **Effortlessly conduct root cause analysis**
Effectively manage the underlying causes of an incident to prevent its recurrence.

⊙ **Effectively implement control measures**
Automate CAPA processes to apply risk mitigation strategies efficiently.

⊙ **Maintain regulatory compliance**
Ensure compliance with OSHA injury and illness record-keeping and reporting regulations.
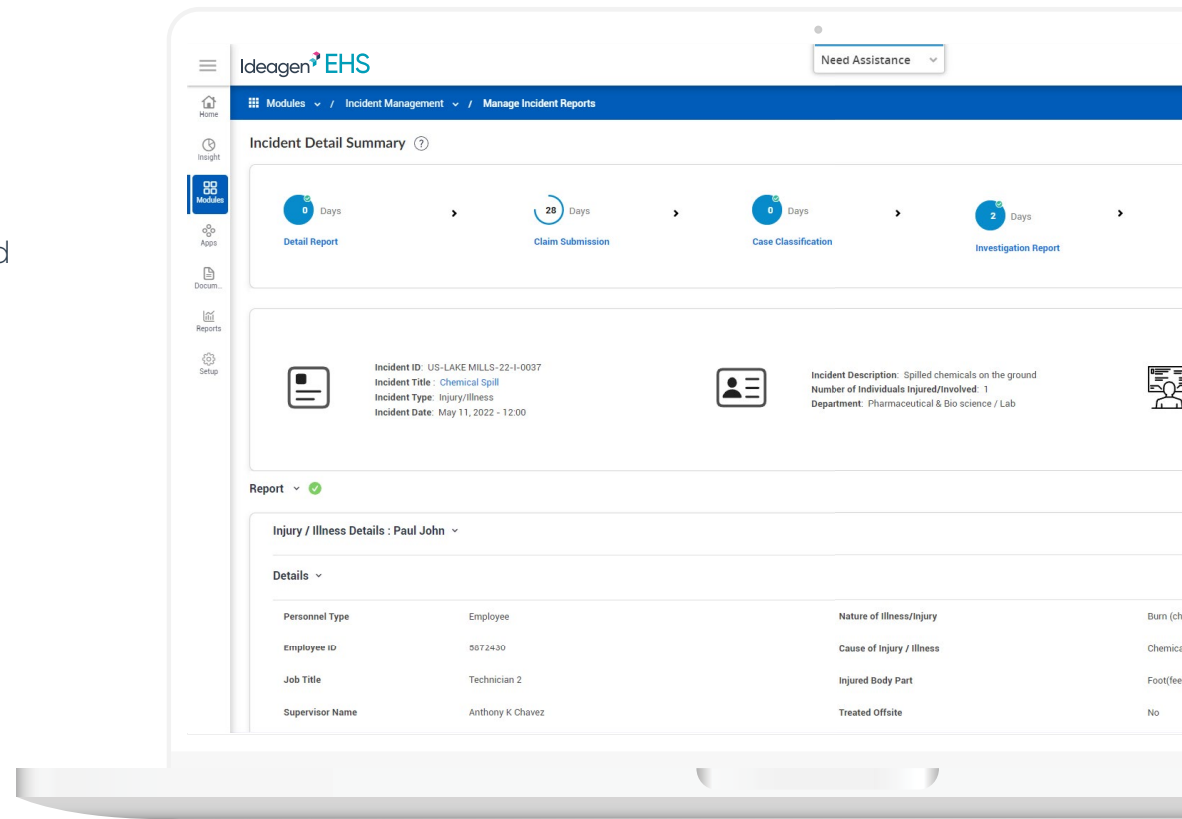
By leveraging technology, organizations can enhance their incident reporting and management processes, ensuring employee safety and regulatory compliance.

How Ideagen can help

Building a strong safety culture is essential to improve workplace safety, but it takes commitment. Companies that want to build a strong safety culture need a strong foundation of reporting, notifications, and visibility to demonstrate progress to their workforce. Adopting enterprise-wide EHS software is a great place to start.

Incident reporting, corrective action tracking, and auditing software from Ideagen can help you take your workplace culture to the next level. Schedule a demo today to learn more about how Ideagen EHS can help you make a safer, more compliant workplace.

Request a demo

Ideagen

Solutions for regulated industries

e: info@ideagen.com | w: ideagen.com