



Alliant Construction

NEAR MISSES:

Turn a Close Call into a Contribution to Safety

75% of all accidents are preceded by one or more near misses, according to the National Safety Council.

Learn From Near Misses

When you're driving the speed limit down the highway and another car pulls out in front of you, it's necessary to hit the brakes or execute a quick maneuver to avoid an accident. Chances are you'll make a mental note to be more alert from that point on.

Close calls or near accidents on the job should also be considered lessons in safety. A near accident is an indication something is wrong. It's a warning that a machine isn't operating correctly, materials aren't stacked properly, or someone has done something unsafe.

Warning Signs

If you notice a warning light on the dashboard of your vehicle, you know immediately not to ignore it. Unfortunately, unsafe actions on the job aren't always as easily detected and employees may not realize they should always report near misses—no matter how trivial they may seem.

Below are some typical accidents that could have been avoided if their “warnings” had not been ignored.

- A job-site employee stumbles over a two-by-four lying on the ground, fracturing an ankle.
- Instead of using a ladder, an employee puts a box on top of a drum, loses balance and tumbles to the ground.
- A machine operator is injured when a hi-lo strikes the machine being operated.

Employees sometimes decide if nobody gets hurt and there is no damage, then it’s not really an accident, but this is a part of the problem. All near misses need to be reported and discussed with a supervisor. Although the above examples may not have resulted in a serious outcome, these incidents could have serious consequences in the future.

Keep Safety in Mind

Unfortunately, when a near accident goes unreported, corrective action cannot be taken to prevent similar – or more serious – accidents from happening in the future. How can you turn a close call into a contribution to safety?

- Establish a simple near miss reporting system without blame or repercussions and encourage employees to report all near misses as soon as possible.
- Give employees as many reporting options as possible and make it as simple as possible to report near misses via phone call, text or email.
- Take all reported incidents seriously no matter how minor they may seem.
- Review, analyse and discuss all near misses weekly to identify the causes of the incidents.
- Correct any dangerous situation and remove the hazard that caused the near-accident.
- Train employees on how to recognize potentially dangerous situations and provide incentives to encourage consistent reporting.

Safety awareness is always important. Learn from near misses. They can serve as a warning and highlight areas or situations where safety practices need to be improved.

For more information contact:

Michael Heffernan

Executive Vice President

(408) 352-6701 | mheffernan@alliant.com

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