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15.1 Introduction

A safety investigation is the process of conducting a systematic examination of an event/incident in order to discover the root cause, make recommendations and identify preventive and/or corrective actions. It is the policy of Saint Mary's University that all incidents shall be reported and that all incidents that result in significant personal injury to people or significant damage to property shall be investigated. Significant "near miss" incidents that could have resulted in such loss shall also be investigated.

An incident is any unplanned and unwanted event which results in damage or injury, or which could have resulted in damage or injury. This term includes property or equipment damage as well as personal injury. Injury also includes occupational illness and disease.

15.2 Purpose of Incident Investigation

The University's intent is to develop a reporting and investigation program that is based on accurate, complete reporting and the thorough analysis of factual information gathered through comprehensive examination of all factors involved. The results of the investigation are meant to be used as a basis for action aimed at preventing similar incidents in the future. It is specifically not the function of this process to assign liability to or find fault with any person or persons.

In addition to incidents involving injury, property damage and lost time, incidents that have been identified as posing potential risk (i.e. near misses) are very important to report and investigate as the risk can be reduced or eliminated before the potential for injury or property damage is realized. Investigating near misses can prevent an incident or accident from happening.

15.3 Responsibilities for Incident Reporting and Investigation

15.3.1 Executive Management Group

The University's Executive Management Group is responsible to:

- ensure that the Director of Occupational Health and Safety, Department of Labour and Advanced Education is notified of all serious incidents, as required by the OHS Act;
- ensure that police and other agencies are notified, where required;
- ensure that significant incidents are investigated to determine causes;
- ensure that appropriate measures are implemented to prevent recurrence of the incidents;
- ensure that appropriate investigative systems and tools have been developed; and
- ensure that, where required, managers, chairs and Safety Committee Members are trained in conducting investigations.

15.3.2 Senior Directors, Directors, Deans, Managers, and Chairs

Managers and Chairs are responsible to:

- ensure all OHS incidents are reported;
- participate in investigations to determine the cause(s) of incidents (in cooperation with the OHS Office and the JOHS Committee, or Safety Sub-Committee);
- make recommendations for corrective action;
- ensure that corrective actions or other appropriate measures are implemented to prevent recurrence of the incident.

15.3.3 Employees

Employees are responsible to:

- report all incidents to their Chairs or Managers;
- complete the OHS Incident Report Form;
- co-operate fully with any investigation of the incident, providing all information relevant to the investigation;
- co-operate with the implementation of appropriate measures to prevent recurrence of the incident.

15.3.4 JOHS Committee and Safety Sub-committees

Safety Committees play an important role in the incident investigation process:

- reviewing all incident reports, concern reports and management investigation reports to ensure that corrective action is appropriate and done in a timely manner;
- participating in investigations. This can be done by carrying out their own investigation, participating in management investigations or reviewing management's investigation reports;
- following the completion of the investigation, the JOHSC or Safety Sub-Committee(s) shall review the report of the incident investigation, including completeness, any recommendations that are made, and whether further investigation may be necessary;
- recommending that further investigation of any incident be undertaken where it is felt more information is required to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the incident or to determine appropriate measures to prevent reoccurrence; and
- assisting the OHS Office in making an assessment of the effectiveness of any preventive and corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence of the incident.

15.3.5 OHS Office

The OHS Office is responsible to:

- provide advice in planning for the investigation of an incident and in the actual conduct of the investigation;

- where necessary, seek/recommend professional OHS advice or legal counsel relevant to the investigation;
- monitor to ensure that preventive measures are implemented in a timely manner, reporting the conclusions of such monitoring to the Safety Committee;
- ensure that an assessment is undertaken of the effectiveness of any preventive and corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of the incident. This may involve a follow-up inspection or other evaluation and may require the participation of the Safety Committee; and
- provide a Monthly Summary of Incident Reports to the Safety Committees;
- ensure opportunities for investigation training are provided, where required.

15.4 Incident Reporting Within the University

The following safety-related incidents shall be reported by completing the OHS Incident Report:

- any injury to an employee, including all medical aid, including first aid, and lost time incidents and any incident where a claim is made to the Workers' Compensation Board;
- any injury to another member of the Saint Mary's Community requiring medical treatment;
- any incident that is included in the definition of the University's Violence in the Workplace Prevention Policy;
- any non-injury (near miss) incident which had the potential of causing an injury to the employee, or another member of the Saint Mary's Community, or cause serious property damage;
- any serious property damage incident;
- any major spills or releases of chemicals;
- any major flooding;
- any fires or explosions.

As time is of the essence in undertaking an investigation, this Report should be completed as soon as possible; ideally within 24 hours of the occurrence. A copy of the Incident form can be obtained from the OHS Office or on the OHS Website at: <http://www.smu.ca/webfiles/InjuryForm2010-1.pdf>

The employee and the manager or chair completing the incident report are expected to provide recommendations for actions to prevent the incident from recurring, in the Prevention section of the incident report.

The original completed, signed Incident Form shall be forwarded to the OHS Office for statistical input, and follow-up where required. A copy shall be given to the University's Risk Manager, Financial Services.

The University's Safety Committees will periodically review incident and concern statistics and may undertake an investigation based on this review. Also, when requested by a member of the Saint Mary's Community, the JOHS Committee or Safety Sub-committee will initiate an investigation process.

It is not mandatory to investigate all non-injury, first aid, non-serious “near miss” or non-serious property damage incidents, although they are reported for statistical purposes. If a series of similar incidents occur, it may be beneficial to investigate to see if there is an unrecognized or inadequately controlled hazard which should be addressed in some way.

15.5 Incident Reporting to Outside Agencies

15.5.1 Labour and Advanced Education

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education must be notified of the following:

- A fire or accident in the workplace that causes bodily injury, within seven days;
- An accidental explosion at the workplace, regardless anyone is injured or not, within 24 hours;
- Death or a potentially fatal injury, within 24 hours.

“Bodily injury” is deemed, by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, to include unconsciousness; loss of a substantial amount of blood; fracture of a leg or arm; amputation of a leg, arm, hand or foot; burns to a major part of the body, loss of sight in an eye and any injury that places life in jeopardy.” The JOHSC will be given a copy of any notifications to the Department of Labour and Advanced Education by the University.

15.5.2 Workers Compensation Board (WCB)

An incident that results in a doctor’s visit or lost time, for an employee that is covered by WCB, must be reported to WCB. The manager of the injured employee must complete a WCB Injury Report within five working days and forward to the OHS Office. Failure to do so will result in a fine from WCB. WCB will review all material to determine whether a claim will be approved. WCB also has the right to investigate further, if they deem it necessary to do so. As WCB reports are considered confidential medical reports; a copy of the report is not to be included with the investigation report.

15.6 Incident Investigation

In the case of a serious incident or an incident that has resulted in serious injury to a person at or near the workplace, University Security will secure the scene and any physical evidence, take pictures as necessary, document any eyewitness accounts, provide emergency first and direct emergency vehicles to the scene. The appropriate management representative shall be responsible to ensure an investigation is completed, in consultation with the JOHSC. The OHS Office will assist with safety investigations.

Steps in the investigation process are:

- Gather information (including physical evidence and interviews)

- Analyze the data
- Draw conclusions
- Make recommendations
- Implement recommendations
- Follow up

Further detail on each of these steps will be provided during training.

15.7 Review of Effectiveness of Preventive and Corrective Actions

Following the reporting and investigation of any OHS incident, the recommendations which have been made and the action which has been taken shall be reviewed to determine the effectiveness of preventive and corrective actions.

This review shall be conducted by the OHS Office, in consultation with the Safety Committee. The investigation results and recommendations and the review of the effectiveness of preventive and corrective actions shall form part of the management review and continual improvement of the OHS Program.