ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION GUIDELINES

Who Should Conduct Investigations?

- THE SUPERVISOR

Since documenting and reporting occupational injuries and accidents is mandatory, the supervisor, with the assistance of the department safety officer, should be responsible to conduct an investigation, as soon as possible after the event and once the Supervisor's Report of Employee Accident/Injury is completed. Accident investigation is a process that involves utilizing facts and forming conclusions. The information shall be properly recorded in the appropriate forms developed by the Risk Management Safety Unit for this purpose, then submitted to the Third Party Administrator.

- THE CITY-WIDE SAFETY UNIT

The City-wide Safety Unit is available to advise and/or assist in the investigative effort by reviewing the final analysis and providing recommendations/action plans to the department with follow-up on the completion date. The Safety Unit has specialized training and experience in accident investigation.

- THIRD PARTY ADMINISTRATOR *(Gallagher Bassett Services)*

The City has designated Gallagher Bassett Services as the Third Party Administrator (TPA) to administer the claims. The adjusters rely on the supervisor/investigator to provide them with well-supported information for each accident/incident to make proper claims decisions. It is of a paramount importance that the supervisor/investigator works closely and cooperates with the adjusters in order to ensure fast, fair and reasonable claims solution. The first report from the supervisor and any witnesses at this stage of a case is crucial for the legal development and adjudication of a claim in the future. The following guidelines have been developed for the supervisors to follow when reporting an accident and/or an exposure.

Analyzing the Accident Scene

An investigation should be made as soon after the accident as possible. Any delay may result in evidence being destroyed, removed or altered.

A documented review of the accident scene will produce information that can help. In this review the supervisor/investigator should:

- Identify and locate materials, machines and tools involved in the accident;
- Review deficiencies in operating processes and procedures;
- Disclose unsafe work on practices that may be caused by lack of safety training.
- Provide information needed by the City's TPA for claims processing; and,
- Provide information needed to pursue the City's subrogation rights.

Fact Finding

The purpose of an accident investigation is to find facts, not fault. The facts will then serve as a guide to the conditions that caused the accident. The facts should identify the "why" or root cause of the accident, as well as the "who, what, when and where."

The goal of fact finding is to have the investigator expand his/her thinking and not focus solely on the type of accident or injury. A broader view of the facts surrounding the accident will help point to contributing factors that lead to the root cause. This expanded view will also help the investigator identify a variety of preventive measures that can be implemented to correct the situation or condition and avoid recurrences.

The following information lists a variety of subject areas that should be included in an accident investigation. The investigator must be creative and inquisitive. Review the following items:

- WORK CHARACTERISTICS
  What is the type of work activity and size of the operation?
  How many employees are involved? Too many? Too few?

- ENVIRONMENT
  Was the weather a contributing factor: clear, rain, wind?

- TIME FACTORS
  What was the time of day and how could it have related to the shift? Consider the phase of the employees work: performing work, rest period, lunch period, overtime, entering or leaving the work site, building or office.

- EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS
  What is the employee's work experience? How often is the work activity repeated? How often has the employee engaged in such work? Does employee have a history of on-the-job accidents? How many? What type?

- A NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION
  Explain what the person was doing. What objects were involved? Which actions and movements led to the accident?

- EQUIPMENT CHARACTERISTICS
  Describe the type, brand, model, size and any distinguishing features, its condition and the specific part of the equipment involved. Include the identification number and any known modifications that may have been made to the equipment prior to the accident. Was the equipment inspected before it was used? Was the employee trained to use the equipment?

- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TASK
  The general task being performed (repairing a tire) and the specific activity (using a power impact wrench). Include the posture and location of employee (squatting under the rear of the truck) and whether working alone or with others.

- PREVENTIVE MEASURES
  What personal protective equipment was being worn? What kind of training did the employee have for the task he/she was performing? Did standards for the procedure exist? Were they written? Were they followed? Where was the supervisor at the time of the accident?

- ACCIDENT SEVERITY
  The nature of the injury or injuries and parts of the body affected.

After reviewing the above information, the final analysis should suggest specific corrective action or actions that will prevent recurrences of the sequence of events that led to the accident.

Categories for Corrective Action

The investigator must first form a basic understanding of the events that took place. Then at each step of the sequence of events, he/she should see if a change in one of those areas would have prevented the sequence from continuing.

The following list of categories should be evaluated:

- MACHINES
  - Hazardous conditions, construction or design
  - Equipment, tools and objects
- PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT
  - Location of equipment, tools and objects in the workplace
  - Location of employees in the work space
- EMPLOYEES
  - Action, task or activity
  - Work procedures
  - Personal protective equipment
- MANAGEMENT
  - Supervision
  - Communication
  - Training

Applying the Analysis

An analysis will always reveal information which can be used effectively in reducing accidents. Merely obtaining the information will not prevent recurrence of the accident. The conditions which contribute to the accident must be corrected. It must be stressed that these guidelines do not provide a ready answer to accident prevention, but rather a guide to aid in accident investigations, analysis and corrective action. Corrective action must focus on such things as eliminating unsafe conditions and correcting unsafe acts.

UNSAFE CONDITION:
An unsafe condition is a mechanical and/or physical hazard that is recognized but not corrected and/or ignored, or an unrecognized mechanical and/or physical hazard.

UNSAFE ACT:
An unsafe act is when an employee(s) deviates from a written and/or verbal instruction, policy, procedure or work practice.

Human Factors and the Accident Analysis

The following human factors are considered the most frequent cause of accidents:

*Physical Inability	*Over Confidence	*Absentmindedness
*Boredom	*Disregard of danger	*Undue haste
*Distraction	*Anger	*Indifference
*Impatience	*Horseplay	*Fatigue
*Resentment of Authority	*Inattention to Instruction	*Stress

The following paragraph illustrates some of the contributing human factors listed above:

A worker who lacks training at a job of loading heavy parts may become fatigued from his/her efforts to do what a more skilled worker would do easily. This same worker would fall behind and then try to hurry to catch up. Encountering a minor difficulty, the same employee may lose patience and throw his/her weight needlessly into the task which could result in a fall or other injury. It is easy to see that one cause of the unsafe act was anger or impatience. Other causes were undue haste, fatigue and a lack of skill. However, the root cause may be lack of training.

Preparing the Investigative Report

Accurate records of accidents and near-misses are essential to an efficient and successful accident investigation and analysis program. Well-documented accident investigations will contain information that can be used to transform haphazard, costly and ineffective work into a planned safety program. The investigation should point to the cause. It should indicate such things as:

- At what point did the system break down?
- Were rules and regulations violated?
- Did poor layout of the job, process or operation contribute to the accident?
- What human or environmental factors contributed to the accident?

The investigation should be handled by the supervisor and reviewed by others as may be deemed appropriate. The investigator should know the nature of the work, how it should be done and under which conditions it was done. The investigator's questions and attitude should demonstrate that the purpose is to gather the facts. The investigator should <u>not</u> be interested in fault or trying to fix blame.

Start with reviewing and assessing the accident scene. Reconstruct the events that led up to the accident. If necessary, consider taking pictures; measure and draw a diagram; list all the machines, equipment and materials that were being used; get a list of witnesses: where were they and what did they see or hear? Interview the employee directly involved. If the injury is minor proceed; if seriously injured, postpone until medical needs are taken care of.

Consider a re-enactment of the events that led to the accident. Try a walk-through and a talk-through re-enactment.

<u>NEVER ASK AN EMPLOYEE TO REPEAT A JOB WHERE AN OBVIOUS VIOLATION OF DIRECTIVES OR AN UNSAFE WORK PRACTICE IS EVIDENT.</u>

The re-enactment will help explain the relationship between the work crew or person, the machine and the environment.