

HARLOW COUNCIL

Addendum to Health and Safety Policy

Investigation of Accidents/Incidents

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Author(s): **Health & Safety Team**

Introduction

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places specific duties on employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of employees as well as the health and safety of other persons who may be affected by their work activities.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers must assess significant risks to the health and safety of both employees and other persons who may be affected by their work activities.

Additional responsibilities for the reporting and investigation of accidents are contained in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy is a disciplinary offence, which in serious cases could lead to dismissal.

General Statement

Apart from the physical and mental suffering of people injured at work, the cost of accidents and incidents is a financial drain on all Services within the Council. The reduction in the number of accidents/incidents will therefore be of benefit to both staff and the Council as a whole.

Although Harlow Council's accident record is generally below the national average, it is still necessary to consider ways in which it can be further lowered.

A comprehensive accident/incident investigation policy is one part of the process of reducing accidents at work.

It must be emphasised, however, that the primary purpose of investigating any accident/incident is to identify causes and develop strategies that will prevent the likelihood of recurrences, and not to lay blame.

The Causes of Accidents

Accidents have many causes. What may appear to be bad luck (being in the wrong place at the wrong time) can, on analysis, be seen as a chain of failures and errors that lead almost inevitably to an accident, these causes can be classified as,

- Immediate Causes The actual thing responsible for the injury or ill health (the blade, the trailing lead, the dust etc.)
- Underlying Causes Unsafe acts and unsafe conditions (the guard removed, the lifting equipment not available etc.)
- Root Causes The failure from which all other failings grow, often remote in time and space from the actual accident (failure to identify training needs and assess competence, low priority given to risk assessment, staff ignoring safe systems of work etc.)

In order to prevent accidents it is necessary to provide effective risk control measures which address the immediate, underlying and the root causes.

Types of Investigation

The following are procedures for the type of investigation that will be most appropriate depending on the nature and seriousness of the accident/incident.

A Minor Accidents Not Requiring Notification to the HSE

The relevant Team Leader/Manager must consider what caused the incident and what can be done to prevent a recurrence.

The investigation of a minor accident, to a member of staff in the workplace, will normally be sufficiently detailed in the accident section on the Harlow Council Accident/Incident form, accessible on the Kaonet. In particular the section headed 'Line Managers Report' must be fully completed, If it is felt to be appropriate a separate report can be appended to the completed form.

Investigation of minor accidents is not an option and **must** be undertaken for all occurrences.

B Accidents Requiring Notification to the HSE

This type of accident occurs much less frequently but will be more serious in its nature. Included in this section are both over seven day and major injuries.

Over 7 day Accidents

As soon as it is known that an accident requires notification to the HSE the relevant Manager must ensure that a more formal localised investigation is undertaken. Aspects that should be considered by the investigation include: events leading up to the incident, has a risk assessment been carried out, are the current safe working procedures adequate, the provision of training and supervision arrangements. The Safety Team will not automatically investigate this type of accident but will assist in the investigation if requested to do so by the Service concerned.

Major Injuries

The Safety Team will always investigate accidents of this kind.

The investigation of accidents requiring notification to the HSE should always result in a short report with appropriate recommendations and timescale for implementation.

C Accidents/Incidents with the Potential for Wider Implication

Very occasionally there will be an accident/incident which is either very serious in its nature or may have corporate implications. For these, there will be a need to implement a formal investigation procedure that may include Officers from outside of the Service where the accident/incident occurred, and the Trade Unions.

- I. The Health and Safety/HR Manager will notify the Head of Service responsible for health and safety matters of any accident or incident that, in his /her opinion, falls within the scope of this type of investigation;
- II. The Head of Service will initiate the formation of a small group to investigate and make recommendations, and will set a timescale for this to be carried out;

- III. The group will include;
- A Manager from outside the incident area, who will act as Chair
 - A representative from the Insurance and Risk Management Service
 - A representative from the Health and Safety Team
 - A Trade Union representative
- IV. The investigation group will consider the incident, interview any relevant members of staff from the incident area, and take technical advice from any other Officers
- V. A report of the group's findings, together with recommendations, will be submitted to the Head of Service for action

The implementation of a formal investigation procedure, of this nature, will not replace the requirement for Managers to ensure that the normal local investigation, required of any accident/incident, has been undertaken.

A Guide to the Investigation Process

Gathering the Information

Begin straight away or as soon as practicable. Find out what happened and what conditions and actions influenced the accident.

It is important to capture information as soon as possible. This stops it being corrupted e.g. items moved, guards replaced etc. If necessary work must stop and unauthorised access be prevented.

Talk to everyone who was close by when the accident happened, especially those who saw what happened or know anything about the conditions that led to it.

The amount of time and effort spent on information gathering should be proportionate to the level of investigation. Collect all available and relevant information including photographs and details of the environmental conditions at the time. Any notes taken should be kept at least until the investigation is complete.

Analysing the Information

An analysis involves examining all of the facts, determining what happened and why. All the detailed information gathered should be assembled and examined to identify what information is relevant and what information is missing.

The information gathering and analysis are normally carried out side by side. As the analysis progresses, further lines of enquiry may develop.

To be thorough and free from bias, the analysis should be carried out in a systematic way, so that all the possible causes and consequences of the accident are fully considered.

Identifying Suitable Risk Control Measures

The methodical approach adopted in the analysis stage will enable failings and possible solutions to be identified. These solutions need to be systematically evaluated and only the most effective should be considered for implementation.

If several risk control measures are identified they should be carefully prioritised within a risk control action plan, which sets out what needs to be done, when and by whom. Someone should be assigned to ensure the timetable for implementation is monitored.

The Action Plan and Its Implementation

An action plan for the implementation of additional risk control measures is the desired outcome of a thorough investigation. The action plan should have SMART objectives, i.e. Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and with Timescales.

Safety Representatives

Formally appointed Trade Union Safety Representatives have a right, under Health and Safety legislation, to investigate accidents within the work location that they represent, and should be invited to participate in any Service arranged accident investigation.

Accident Investigation Training

The Environmental Health Support/Health and Safety Team can arrange accident investigation training for all relevant Managers, Team Leaders and Safety Representatives.

Health and Safety Team
Ext 6499

Revision History

Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked
	None	Original Draft document	
		Updates from Draft. Inserted Revision History. Logo changed	No
1/2014	None	Reviewed and updated contact details	No
April 2020		Reviewed and updated Replaced Infonet with Kaonet Removal of reference to forms no longer in use	No