

# **Manager's Toolkit for Creating a Safety Program for Your Tree Nursery Operation**

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## Manager's Toolkit for Creating a Safety Program for Your Tree Nursery Operation

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Published July 2009

For more information about this and many other topics in agricultural safety, please visit the Florida AgSafe Web site at <http://www.flagsafe.ufl.edu>.

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## How to Use This Toolkit

One of the first things you may notice about this part of the toolkit is that it has two title pages, the one on the front of the book and the one a few pages after this. That is because this book is really a manual within a manual. We have designed it so that you can take it apart and customize it for use in your tree nursery operation. The first few pages will tell you how the toolkit works, what other materials are available, and where to find them.

The toolkit includes:

- Guidance for creating a safety program and using the toolkit materials
- “Safety Policies & Procedures” manual that you use in safety training
- A PowerPoint presentation that covers safe practices for all typical tasks and equipment in a tree nursery operation
- A Contact Sheet that you can use as a model or fill in for use in your operation

## Getting Started with Safety

A safety program often begins after a catastrophic injury has negatively affected an operation, and it becomes obvious (or court-mandated) that safety training is essential to good business practice.

But there is another way.

Where a safety program should begin is with management’s commitment to the safety of workers. That is a moral commitment, but it also makes business sense. A workplace that minimizes the downtime and absences that can result from work-related injuries is a more productive workplace. Morale is higher when workers know that management is committed to their well-being and cares about them beyond the labor they provide. A safe workplace has lower insurance costs, lower worker compensation costs, and if court costs and financial judgments can be avoided, so much the better. Of course, you want to do the right thing, but it helps to know that doing the right thing is also the smart thing.

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## Creating Your Safety Program

The goal of a safety program is to create a culture of safe work practice.

That means instilling attitudes and knowledge about safety at every level of your operation. As you read in the preceding section, this begins when management makes a commitment to safety. When owners and managers decide that “Safety is Job One,” to paraphrase a famous slogan, then supervisors will understand that safety must never be sacrificed for expediency or economy. When supervisors have the safety attitude, workers will be sent out with proper equipment and proper training. When workers are educated to work safely and when they are empowered to insist on safe practices, the number of workplace injuries of all kinds will become fewer and fewer. Of course, there is always the unexpected, but even then, a good safety program trains workers and supervisors how to respond to emergencies in such a way that the impact of a workplace incident is reduced.

To achieve the effects we’ve described your safety program must do three things:

- Lay the proper foundation of safety commitment and safety knowledge with every employee
- Make safety training an ongoing aspect of the workplace
- Create a feedback mechanism so that if an incident does occur, it generates information that makes the incident less likely to occur in the future

This toolkit provides you with materials to address all three of these areas. So, turn the page and get started with safety!

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## Step 1: Laying the Foundation

The foundation of your safety program has two parts:

- Safety policies and procedures
- Safe work practices

Materials to address each of these parts are provided in the toolkit.

**Safety policies and procedures** — The manual that you will find in the later pages of this toolkit can be used as it is or to develop your own safety policies and procedures. This part of your safety foundation answers questions for supervisors and workers such as:

“Is management fully committed to safety?”

“If I do not have the proper equipment or training, am I still required to perform a task?”

“If there is an emergency, who do I contact first?”

“If first aid is required, what do I do?”

You should view these policies from the standpoint of making sure that all employees know that management is 100% committed to safety, that safe practices and safety equipment will be insisted on and provided for every task in order to prevent workplace injury, that if an incident occurs, the primary concern is the life and health of injured workers, and last but not least, if an incident occurs, medically appropriate and legally defensible action was taken as quickly as possible. Should an injury or death occur in the workplace, management must be able to meet a grieving family knowing that they did everything possible.

A Contact List form is included at the end of the Policies and Procedures manual. You can print out this form and fill it out, or it is also available as a separate, fillable electronic form that you can fill out on your computer and save or print.

**Safe work practices** — A safe workplace means the correct procedure conducted with the correct equipment by a fully trained worker equipped with appropriate safety gear. This toolkit includes a PowerPoint presentation that covers many aspects of tree nursery operations using this philosophy. When thinking about workplace injury, one’s first thought might be catastrophic injury involving collisions, crushing, lacerations, etc. But most employee downtime is caused by chronic injury that results from poor work practice or long-term exposures. A tool as simple as a shovel, if used improperly, can lead to back pain or sprain, and even when used properly, a missed stroke can result in a lacerated foot if a worker is wearing the wrong shoes. And what about carelessly thrown dirt in the eyes? Remind employees that even a simple task can be done the right way or the wrong way. Not every employee has the same sense of quality or commitment. This is something that managers and supervisors deal with all the time. But all employees can learn the right way to perform their jobs.

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**Other training issues —**

Anticipate some resistance. For some workers, safety training will be a change in workplace culture, and surprisingly, some people may resist using safety equipment or using safe work practices. Most people prefer to do things the way they already do them. They may raise many kinds of objections, such as “safe practices take too much time,” or “safety equipment feels confining,” or “it is too hot to wear anything extra,” or “I forgot to bring it to work.” For some supervisors, empowering employees to insist on safety equipment and safe work practices may feel like a challenge to their authority. If supervisors or workers feel that management is not 100% committed to safety, they may take this as a signal that compliance is not truly mandatory and that lapses in safe work practices will be overlooked, if, for example, it appears that extra work was accomplished at the expense of safety.

Meet resistance with reason and patience, but both supervisors and workers must understand that their compliance with the safety program is a condition of employment, not a question of good manners or personal choice.

Address the needs of workers for whom English is not a first language. A large number of agricultural operations now employ workers whose first language is not English. If you employ such workers, then you already have experience in meeting the needs of these workers. They may have some English skills but may need special support in understanding the content of safety training. Especially regarding Spanish speakers, crews of these workers are often managed by bilingual supervisors, and management is dependent on these supervisors to accurately communicate employment issues.

**Customizing the Safety Policies and Procedures Manual —** We have created a cover page for the policies and procedures manual, but you may want to add your company information and identity to it or substitute one of your own. The P&P manual is only a few pages long, and you may want to give a copy to each employee. In that case, we have created a space on the cover page where the individual employee’s name can be added. Personalizing the booklet may help employees personalize their responsibility and commitment to safety. If employees take the booklet home, other family members will also be aware of their commitment to safety, and this may encourage conversations about and more awareness of safe practices. An excellent outcome would be if safety training and commitment in the workplace carried over into work (and play!) practices outside the workplace.

If you have a consulting physician for your operation, you may want to review the first-aid guidelines with them. We encourage you not to alter the guidelines without professional guidance. You may want to add a page that applies to hazards that are particular to your locale, such as insect or animal pests. Be aware of any special health needs or allergies of your workers. They may be reluctant to reveal this information if they fear it has implications for their employment or insurability. Encourage workers to reveal information that could be vital in an emergency, such as diabetes or an allergy to bee stings.

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**Customizing the Safe Work Practices PowerPoint presentation** – Specific information about safe work practices is given in a PowerPoint presentation. This information should be presented and discussed by someone who is knowledgeable about safe practices and who is aware of work hazards and their consequences. You may want to review this information with an occupational safety professional and ask them to present it to your workers.

The PowerPoint presentation covers a wide range of typical tasks and equipment that workers may encounter in tree nursery operations. The scope of your operation may be different from that of a typical operation, and therefore, you may want to add some slides to cover additional operations or add images to familiarize employees with the specific equipment or worksites they may encounter in their jobs.

Workers should receive specific safety training for any task they are expected to perform. It isn't just a question of an individual worker knowing the safe practice, but also of other workers knowing that their co-workers have been adequately trained. How co-workers do their jobs is an important aspect of an individual's work environment. Workers who take risks or engage in horseplay not only endanger themselves, they endanger their co-workers and, potentially, bystanders. If an employee or bystander is injured through this kind of negligence, the consequences can threaten the existence of your business.

This safety program is intended not just to inform employees about policies and practices, but also to let them know about management's commitment to safety and to draw from them a similar commitment. The first few slides of the PowerPoint presentation are about explaining this commitment, and your presenter should not rush through them or take this commitment for granted.

An important part of the worker's commitment concerns the use of drugs, alcohol, or other intoxicants. While it should be obvious to workers that they should not use any substance that will interfere with their alertness or judgment on the job, this should always be an explicit part of your safety policy. Workers should also be aware that prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications can have side effects that can affect their alertness. Workers may want to consult a pharmacist about taking cold or flu medications so that they can choose the right medication and understand all its effects.

Creating a drug-free workplace has important implications for your safety program, but achieving a drug-free workplace is beyond the scope of this publication. Depending on the size of and what you do in your operation, you may fall under federal laws with requirements about what you do regarding your employees and drug use. A space has been left in the Policies and Procedures manual for a statement of your company's policy in this area, but you should first get professional guidance to determine your responsibilities under the law and in crafting a policy and a program. The Resources section includes some links that can get you started.

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## Step 2: Thinking Safety Every Day

Printing and distributing policies, training employees in safe practices, and confirming the commitment to safety is where your safety program begins, but to remain effective, your program needs a continuing education component. There are many ways to accomplish this, but you should make plans for a continuing safety program and put those plans into action.

Key elements of your continuing program should include:

- Daily reminders about safe practices, including workplace signage and display spaces dedicated to safety
- Mechanisms that invite group discussions and allow worker feedback about both safe practices in general and specific incidents
- Periodic safety training updates and refreshers

It's easier than you might think. Some workplaces start every day with a few minutes during which employees gather to review the previous day's work and to discuss activities for the new workday. This can be 5-10 minutes that gives employees an opportunity to bring up their safety concerns. New employees can see that safety is taken seriously because of the priority these meetings are given, and they can observe other employees and supervisors expressing their concern for everyone's safety. Supervisors may need guidance to make sure that these sessions are productive, and while giving opportunities to express concerns, do not turn into gripe sessions. A very important element for maintaining the tone of these meetings is for workers to know that legitimate safety concerns are addressed promptly by management.

Once or twice a week, morning meetings can be used for "tailgate training," brief safety reminder sessions that refresh workers' knowledge and remind them to use safe practices. All of us have a tendency to "streamline" our activities, whether out of boredom, irritation, or impatience. This streamlining — not caring as much and omitting details — can become a pattern of shortcuts or negligence on the job. Frequent safety reminders can help workers start each day with a fresh attitude toward their work and a refreshed commitment to work safely. This is a much better approach than waiting for a near-miss or actual injury to wake someone up. Sources of tailgate training materials are listed in the Resources section of this toolkit.

You should also plan longer training/refresher sessions about safety on a monthly or at least quarterly basis. These sessions may become repetitive for long-term employees, but you can keep the sessions fresh, for example, by inviting speakers who can give different perspectives on safety information or by using different formats ranging from straightforward lectures to safety games. Under any circumstances, encourage workers to take the time they spend in these sessions seriously, even if they feel very familiar with the material. Remind them that their safety on the job depends on how well everyone knows and uses safe practices.

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## Step 3: Is It Working?

The third part of your safety program is to make sure that there are feedback mechanisms that prevent incidents in the first place and prevent future incidents should an injury occur in the workplace.

When you have a contract, it is only natural that you want to know the daily progress toward completion of the job. The status of equipment used on company projects is probably a continuing concern of management. It should be just as natural for management to want to know that a safe workplace is being maintained.

Communication about safety in the workplace must go two ways, so that workers know that management will become aware of any incident, near-incident, pattern of unsafe practice, or lack of proper equipment. If a supervisor becomes lax in maintaining a safe workplace, workers must know that they can communicate their concerns appropriately to management and that action will be taken.

You have already read about the usefulness of daily safety meetings that give workers and supervisors an opportunity to review any safety needs, but how will this information get back to management? Supervisors should know that management wants to be informed, and should know who is the management point-person for maintaining a safe workplace.

Also, management should plan to join in occasionally on worker safety training sessions to reinforce the importance of the sessions and to underscore management commitment to safety.

In the event of a specific incident, the Incident Investigation Report is an important tool. Everyone can learn from the contributing causes that lead to an incident, which often result from a combination of factors. Whether a demanding schedule sent someone into the field under unsafe conditions, such as bad weather or ground too soft for heavy equipment, or a worn seat belt gives way and a driver is thrown or injured, or if a worker simply ignores a safe practice, understanding an incident can help you spot weaknesses in your safety program. If an incident occurs, the first question in every worker's mind (and in the minds of their family) will be "Can this happen to me?" Use your incident reports as a way to bolster your training, to train for specific situations, and to reassure workers that they are being given the tools and practices to work safely.

Last but not least! An important aspect of feedback is to let everyone know how well they are doing. On your company safety display, keep track of the number of days without an incident. Reward teams that have exemplary safety records. Acknowledge workers and teams that do the right thing, and in the case of an incident, respond in the right way.

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## Resources for Safety Training

This toolkit and its components can be downloaded at the Florida AgSafe Web site: <http://www.flagsafe.ufl.edu>. Check the Web site for additional resources.

### Agricultural Safety Programs

Many states have an agricultural safety program associated with the state Extension Service. Locate your state's Extension Service using the following link and ask them about agricultural and forestry safety resources in your state or region.

Cooperative State Extension, Education, and Research Service — State Referral Page  
<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/>

### Online Safety Resources

One of the most useful sites for training information, programs, and posters is the National Agricultural Safety Database: <http://www.nasdonline.org>

The toolkit authors have a Web site with many additional resources — Florida AgSafe Web site: <http://www.flagsafe.ufl.edu>

Specifically, tree nursery owners may want to refer to:

Safer Tractor Operations for Landscape Maintenance and Horticultural Industries  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AE198>

The “Hort” Module – Awareness of Risks and Attitudes towards Safety and Health in Horticulture (PDF) : <http://www.flagsafe.ufl.edu/publications/hort-module-lr.pdf>

### Tailgate Training Resources

Agricultural Tailgate Training Safety Modules from Ohio State University  
<http://www.nasdonline.org/menu/state/ohio.html>

Brief Agricultural Safety Lessons from Kansas State University  
<http://www.nasdonline.org/menu/state/kansas.html>

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## **Additional Resources**

### **Creating a Drug-Free Workplace**

To create a drug-free workplace, you should

- Determine your obligation under the law
- Even if you have no legal obligation, you may want to have a written policy about drugs in the workplace in order to provide clear guidance to your employees
- Any written policy should be reviewed by a lawyer or other legal expert

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which has a helpful Web site that you can use to address these issues: <http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/WPWorkit/index.html>

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# Safety Policies & Procedures



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Employee Name

## Introduction

The purpose of our workplace safety program is to establish safety standards and guidelines for management, supervisors, and workers. Our goal is to ensure that everyone in our company is educated properly about all hazards and dangers of the tasks that are performed in our workplace. We hope that this safety training will help employees both on and off the job by helping them to make informed decisions and good choices.

The general goals of any safety program are to educate and inform all employees regarding:

- dangers and hazards associated with any task they will perform as part of their work
- how to perform these tasks safely and use equipment safely
- how to respond in an emergency

This manual is based on:

Safety Policies & Procedures for a Tree Nursery Operation

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## To all employees . . .

Your orientation toward workplace safety and health begins on the first day of employment. Each employee is expected to know and follow all safety rules and procedures pertaining to his or her job as outlined in this manual and in the accompanying training materials. Management and supervisors are committed to creating and maintaining a safe workplace. Supervisors will ask questions and will be available to answer employees' questions to ensure knowledge and understanding of all safety rules and procedures presented in this program. Compliance with safety rules and procedures is mandatory.

Should you have any questions or concerns about any information in this manual, please speak with your supervisor. If you feel that your supervisor does not fully address your concerns, you should contact the following person(s):

NAME	TITLE	PHONE NUMBER
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NAME	TITLE	PHONE NUMBER
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Our company is committed to providing employees with a safe and healthful workplace. Our owners and managers fully support efforts to make our workplace as safe as possible, and our employees are on the front line in those efforts. Employees should report unsafe conditions, and they should not perform work tasks that they consider unsafe. Employees must report all incidents, injuries, and unsafe conditions to their supervisors. Reports will not result in retaliation, penalty, or any other disincentive.

Employee recommendations to improve safety and health conditions will be given careful consideration by our management team. Management will give top priority to correcting unsafe conditions by providing the necessary resources or altering work assignments, for example. Similarly, management will take disciplinary action against any employee who willfully or repeatedly violates workplace safety rules. These actions may include verbal or written reprimands and may ultimately result in termination of employment.

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## **Management Commitment to Safety**

Our management is 100% committed to safeguarding the health and well-being of all employees while they are on the job. To accomplish this, we pledge that:

- Supervisors and workers will be informed of all safety policies and trained in safe practices
- Supervisors should not ask workers to perform any task for which they have not been given the proper training, personal protective equipment, or tools
- Compliance with all safety policies and procedures is mandatory for management, supervisors, and workers
- Supervisors and workers will be interviewed to ensure that they understand all safety policies and procedures
- Our company welcomes employee recommendations to improve safety and health conditions

## **Worker Commitment to Safety**

Our safety program is only as good as each employee's individual commitment to safety. Efficient and high quality work is the result of team effort, and the team is safe on the job only when every member of the team uses safe work practices.

- Each worker is required to know and follow all safety protocols outlined in our safety program manual
  - Workers must report unsafe conditions and are not to perform tasks that are considered unsafe
  - Workers must report all incidents, injuries, and unsafe conditions to their supervisor
  - Workers understand that use of drugs, intoxicants, or medications that interfere with their job performance is unsafe and grounds for dismissal
  - Workers must be aware of any side effects of prescriptions or over-the-counter medications that can interfere with job performance
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## Commitment to a Drug-Free Workplace

Part of the commitment to a safe workplace on the part of management and workers is the commitment to a drug-free workplace. The chronic or addicted use of alcohol and both legal and illegal drugs can have a very negative impact on workplace safety and safe job performance. In addition, misuse of alcohol and drugs can have a devastating impact on individual's private lives, and on the lives of their co-workers, their friends, and often, most seriously, on their family.

## Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke

### Heart Attack

In the movies, a heart attack is usually signalled when someone grabs their chest and drops to the ground. Heart attacks can happen this way, but more often they begin with serious but less dramatic symptoms. Learn to recognize the signs of a heart attack, and if you observe these signs, act quickly:

- Chest discomfort — Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body — Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness

### Stroke

A stroke most often is the result of solid material moving through the arteries and lodging in an artery in the brain. Blood supply is cut off to a portion. If blood and oxygen are cut off long enough, that portion of the brain dies and the functions it controls, such as speech or muscle control are lost. If you see or experience the signs of a stroke, act quickly.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

[Symptoms from the American Heart Association]

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## Responding to Minor Injuries

First-aid kits are located in our office and in all company vehicles (check your vehicle before you take it into the field). If you sustain an injury or are involved in an incident requiring minor first-aid treatment, you are to follow the following procedures:

- Notify your supervisor
- Administer first-aid treatment to the injury as needed
- Provide your supervisor with all details of injury/incident, so an Incident Investigation Report can be properly completed

Non-Emergency Medical Treatment: For non-emergency work-related injuries that require professional medical attention other than first-aid, you must have:

- Obtained management authorization for treatment
- Be treated by an authorized medical provider. Contact the safety coordinator for a list of authorized medical providers

If you sustain an injury or are involved in an incident requiring non-emergency medical treatment, you are to follow the following procedures:

- Notify your supervisor
- Proceed to the authorized medical provider, have co-worker or your supervisor transport you to medical facility
- Provide your supervisor with all details of injury/incident, so an Incident Investigation Report can be properly completed

In all cases requiring first-aid or non-emergency medical treatment, immediately call your supervisor to notify them of the incident or ask a co-worker to do so.

An Incident Investigation Report must be completed each time an incident or injury occurs, you are required to provide all details of the incident or injury to a supervisor for the completion of the incident report.

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## First-Aid Instructions

In the event of injury, there are steps that should be taken to reduce any further injury to the injured employee. These steps are listed below.

### Heat Exhaustion

- Loosen and remove tight or heavy clothing
- Take sips of cool water (drink about 1 cup every 15 minutes)
- Lie down in a cooler, shaded area, and raise legs 6 to 8 inches
- Cool body by fanning and misting cool water, or applying a cool, wet cloth to skin

### Wounds

#### *Minor/Small Cuts, Lacerations, Abrasions, or Punctures*

- Wash the wound using soap and clean water; rinse it well
- Cover the wound using a clean dressing

#### *Major/Large Cuts, Lacerations, or Punctures That Are Deep and Bleeding*

- Stop bleeding by pressing directly on the wound, using a clean bandage or clean cloth
- Keep pressure on the wound until medical help arrives, or you arrive at the hospital

### Burns

#### *Thermal (Heat) Burns*

- Rinse the burned area with cool water; do not scrub the burn area
- Immerse the burned area in cold water, but do not use ice or ice water
- Blot dry the area, and cover with sterile gauze or a clean cloth

#### *Chemical Burns*

- Flush the exposed area with cool water immediately for 15 to 20 minutes

### Eye Injury

#### *Small Particles*

- Do not rub your eyes
- Use the corner of a soft, clean cloth to draw particles out, or hold the eyelids open and flush the eyes continuously with clean water or sterile eyewash

#### *Large or Stuck Particles*

- If the particle is stuck in the eye, do not attempt to remove it
  - Cover **both** eyes with bandage
  - Have co-worker or supervisor transport you to a medical center to receive medical attention
-

### Broken Bones

- If you suspect you may have broken a bone, do not move or allow any one else to move you unless it is absolutely necessary
- If you must move a co-worker with a broken bone, splint the injured area using a board, cardboard, or rolled newspaper as a splint

### Neck and/or Spine Injury

- If a co-worker appears to have injured his or her neck or spine, or is unable to move his or her arm or leg, do not attempt to move the victim unless it is absolutely necessary
- Call for emergency help immediately

## **Incident Investigation Procedures**

The supervisor at the location where the incident occurred will perform an incident investigation. The supervisor is responsible for making sure the Incident Investigation Report is completed properly and that any safety recommendations are addressed.

Supervisors will investigate all incidents, injuries, and occupational diseases using the following investigation procedures:

- Implement temporary control measures to prevent further injuries to employees
- Inspect the equipment, operations, and processes to gain an understanding of the incident situation
- Identify and interview each witness and any other person who might provide clues to the incident's causes
- Investigate causal conditions and unsafe acts; make conclusions based on existing facts
- Complete the Incident Investigation Report
- Provide recommendations for corrective actions
- Indicate the need for additional or remedial safety training

Incident Investigation Reports must be submitted to the Safety Coordinator within 24 hours of the incident.

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# Incident Investigation Report

Date of Incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm

Weather conditions \_\_\_\_\_

Exterior light conditions:  Light  Dark Location:  Indoors  Outdoors

Name of Employee \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Length of experience of the job \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Address of location where incident occurred \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of injury, injury type, and part of body affected \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the incident and how it occurred \_\_\_\_\_

Cause of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Was personal protective equipment required for this task?  Yes  No

Was it provided?  Yes  No

Was it being used?  Yes  No If no, explain why not \_\_\_\_\_

Witnesses to incident \_\_\_\_\_

Was safety training provided to the injured?  Yes  No

Interim corrective actions to prevent recurrence \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent corrective action recommended to prevent recurrence \_\_\_\_\_

Date of report \_\_\_\_\_ Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Status and follow-up action taken by safety coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

