InterSafe
Protecting People

8Steps™
OF EFFECTIVE INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Conducting Interviews

Before an Interview

1	Remember that an incident is a complex situation.
2	The success of the investigation relies on quality information gained from interviews.
3	Interview all people involved, including supervisors called in to provide emergency response or oversee the final stages of the incident.
4	Set a schedule for interviews over approximately two days, depending on the availability of people.
5	Typically allow 1½ - 2 hours for an interview, and allow extra time if translators are required. Allow ½ hour between successive interviews to review notes and prepare for the next interview.
6	Make sure the person's supervisor is aware that an interview is required, where and when.
7	Establish what resources are needed, (e.g. photos, drawings).
8	Turn your phone off during the interview.
9	Establish who will be the lead interviewer and who will be the scribe. Establish your method of recording the interview, (e.g. whiteboard, notebook).
10	Take the list of information/questions established by the team in the planning phase.
11	Establish if the interviewee requires a support person or union representation.
12	Remember, a witness's description of an incident is an hypothesis. People may truly believe their hypothesis / recollection even if it is not substantiated by other evidence. They are not being dishonest, just human.
13	Remember your major task is to understand what happened.
14	Do not complete the interview in fear or favour of any person.
15	Consider the advantages of holding interviews or part interviews at the incident site.
16	Where an interview is conducted in a room, consider using an electronic whiteboard (or flip chart). Ensure the interviewee can see the notes you are taking about their information. This will reassure them.
17	Know the activity – have some insights to the task prior to the interview.
18	Be aware of and try to learn some of the jargon for the industry sector, if necessary.

Beginning an Interview

1	Introduce the investigation team and set context for the interviewee.
2	Make them comfortable, (e.g. offer coffee).
3	Discuss with them the background to the investigation.
4	If necessary, ease or discuss their concerns of disciplinary action.
5	Tell them how long the interview may take.
6	Explain the roles of the interview team. Build rapport early.
7	DO NOT all sit at the other side of the table to the interviewee (as an inquisition). The team leader could sit beside the person. This assists with the drawing of sketches, viewing of photographs, etc.

During an Interview

8	DO use 'value free' words i.e. 'did / did not do; did know / did not know'. DO NOT use safe, unsafe, cause, etc.
9	DO use more probing and closed questions than open questions. DO NOT use leading, multiple or antagonising questions.
10	ALWAYS seek to understand what predisposed the factors in the immediate circumstances of the incident, i.e. Time Zones 1-4.
11	ALWAYS assume interviewee is honest until evidence demonstrates otherwise.
12	DO NOT ask damaging questions that will put them on the defensive. This will reduce participation and results.
13	DO NOT necessarily jump into silence when it occurs.
14	DO NOT ask unrelated questions whilst another interviewer is following a previous line of inquiry. Listen and wait your agreed-upon turn!
15	DO ensure the interviewer leads the interview and is not regularly interrupted by other team members.
16	DO provide opportunity for other interview team members to ask questions.
17	DO practice active listening – wait for the interviewee to finish speaking before the next question is put.
18	DO show empathy.
19	Before exploring the incident, seek to understand the work that this person does. A statement could be: "*We won't initially have a conversation about the incident. I would like to get to know you a little better and the work you do*".

Ending an Interview

20	Ask the interviewee what the business could do differently to prevent such an incident from reoccurring. This is their perception of controllable essential factors.
21	Read back a summary to the interviewee before they leave, getting agreement on what has been said. This will clarify and reinforce your understanding.
22	Finish by thanking the person and: a. Ask if they have any questions. b. If the interview went well, ask if they were happy with it – you want them to leave on a positive note. c. Ask if you could contact them again if necessary and get a mobile number.

After an Interview

1	Seek opportunity to report the interview to the team; and
2	Get your notes typed if possible and have them filed, both in hardcopy and electronically.

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Unit 1, 5 Henry Street
[PO Box 3300]
Loganholme, Qld 4129 Australia
InterSafe ABN 53 071 971 376

Phone: +61 7 3895 8111

enquiries@intersafe.com.au
www.intersafe.com.au