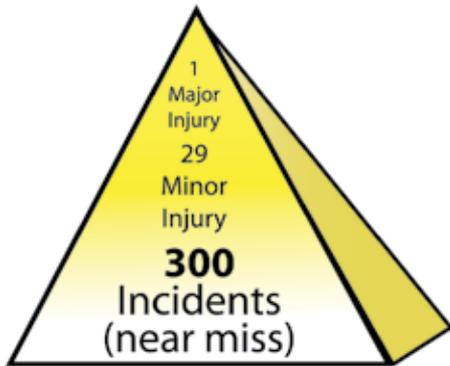


NEAR MISS REPORTS ARE GIFTS!

By Cherie Whelan

In safety, near misses, close calls, or squeakers all refer to an unplanned event that didn't result in injury, illness or damage, but had the potential to do so. Each is also a gift!

Consider a long debated theory in the safety world—the *Accident Triangle*.



A general consensus is for every serious incident that occurs there is consistently a much greater number of near miss incidents, hazards and substandard conditions in the workplace.

I'm from Newfoundland, so I like to use the *it's only the tip of the iceberg* analogy in reference to seeing a small part of a bigger issue. The tip of the iceberg represents the serious incidents such as fatalities, lost time injuries and disabling injuries. When we only react to these incidents, our safety systems miss out on the wealth of potential knowledge that exists unseen under the water.



How do we tap into this potential knowledge? The first way is to view this potential knowledge as a gift. When we are given a glimpse into a deficiency in our systems that doesn't injure our people or harm our equipment, it's an opportunity for improvement and has the potential to prevent a more serious incident from occurring. That's a gift!

Reporting near misses and hazards is key to building a proactive safety culture. Workers must feel able to report near misses and hazards openly and honestly. This means not playing the blame game. If workers are concerned about being blamed for near misses and possible repercussions, these "gifts" will quickly be driven underground. We can't do anything about things we don't know about. So how do we encourage a culture of reporting? We develop a culture where everyone is looking out for each other and uses near miss and hazard reporting as a learning tool.

Leadership sponsorship:

We'll have a hard time building a reporting culture if leadership does not support reporting. Reinforcing near miss and hazard reporting as an opportunity to reduce risk and prevent harmful incidents is the first step. Too often we become complacent to hazards and near misses that surround us to the point that we no longer see the potential risk.

Reporting and tracking:

Workers need to know what to do after they've recognized a hazard or experienced a near miss. This doesn't have to be fancy and it doesn't require investing in complex and expensive information systems. The important thing is to have a means to track the where, what and why of the incident and ensure someone in your business is notified. KISS (keep it simple and straightforward!) applies here. Make it really easy for your workers to report near misses. Many companies have developed small cards that can be completed as events happen. At the last company I worked with, we were implementing a reporting system on a phone app where a worker could take a picture with a phone and make a quick note. It automatically went to his

supervisor and this started the incident record. Employers need to remove barriers to reporting and make it as easy as possible.

Investigate:

If the hazard or near miss had potential to cause serious injury, investigating the causes, identifying and implementing corrective actions will help to prevent similar or more serious incidents from happening in the future. Many companies are managing near misses that could cause significant loss with the same diligence they would those incidents that result in actual loss.

Learn from it:

Sam Levenson said, "You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself." Sharing near miss and close calls with others who work in similar environments with similar equipment/processes helps others to identify potential hazards in their own workplace. Sharing also lets the person who made the report see that something is being done about it and feel good about taking action to report it. (BCFSC has shared almost 1,200 industry alerts here: <http://www.bcforestsafesafe.org/node/2690>)

Communicate back to the worker:

Nothing is more deflating to a worker than raising a safety concern, not seeing anything done about it and not knowing why. If a worker takes the time to report a hazard or near miss, follow up with them on what is being done about it.▲

Cherie Whelan, CRSP, joined the BC Forest Safety Council in June 2016 as Director, SAFE Companies, bringing more than 20 years of diverse health and safety experience to her new role. She most recently worked for Suncor Energy and TransAlta and is a former lead OHS investigator for the Government of Alberta.

growing aggregate demand at “normal” levels: the US South. While we always have ups-and-downs in month-to-month lumber volumes, long-term growth will come from the US South to compensate for the physical log constraints and shrunken capacities in the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada.▲

Brooks Mendell is president of Forisk Consulting. This article includes data from Forisk’s Q3 2016 Forisk Research Quarterly (FRQ), which includes forest industry analysis and timber price forecasts for North America. Forisk clients own and manage over 100 million acres of timberland and consume over 150 millions tons of wood annually at manufacturing facilities in North America.

Safety Ombudsman. Always, the overriding rule and understanding for all parties must be: safety comes first, no matter what.

Looking forward, general log truck driver safety, along with education and awareness, incident data analysis, weights, cycle times, speed and improving operational practices will continue to be areas of focus for TAG and LTTAC. The groups will also look increasingly at driver health and wellness, fatigue, load securement, resource road radio channels, and any other emerging safety issues to ensure industry is engaged and responsive.

While the log hauling sector has a better than average safety performance when compared to other areas of commercial trucking, we know more work is needed to further reduce incidents. Industry can only be assured of the right outcomes when it continues to have an unwavering commitment to safety with each and every load.▲

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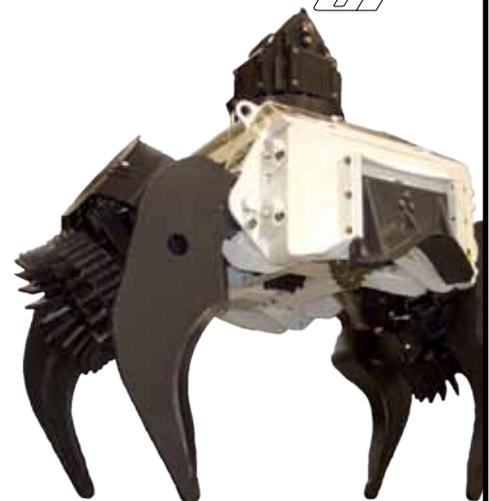


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