



## Toolbox Talk: Near Misses - Recognizing the warning signs

Near misses are incidents that could have caused an accident, but didn't. How many times have you shrugged off a near miss and not given it a second thought? Next time, think twice. Reporting a near miss could prevent a serious accident from occurring.

One study shows that for every 330 incidents of the same type, 300 produce no injuries, 29 produce minor injuries and one produces a major injury. (Of course, these statistics vary with the job being done.) The problem is we never know which time the major injury will occur. Near misses are warnings. If we heed these warnings and look for causes, we may be able to prevent injury or damage.

### Example

- You're going up some stairs and your foot slips on a loose tread. You are able to regain your balance and prevent a fall. No harm done.
- Another worker comes along. She slips on the same loose tread and has to grab the handrail to prevent herself from falling. Again, no harm done.
- A third worker walks up the stairs carrying a box. He slips on the same loose tread and falls, breaking his ankle.
- Could this accident have been prevented? Yes. If the two near miss warnings had been reported rather than ignored, the tread could have been fixed and the accident not occurred.

### Handling a Near Miss

Be sure to report all near misses to your supervisor. Near misses should be handled in the same manner as an accident. The incident should be investigated and equipment taken out of service or the scene secured, if necessary. Then, corrective action should be taken to prevent a reoccurrence. Often the cause is apparent and corrective action can be taken care of immediately, such as nailing the loose tread that was mentioned in the example above.

With some near misses, a more formal investigation may be required. For example, in the incident described above, you find that the initial nails used to secure the treads were too short and feel nailing them back in may not be sufficient. In this case, a more formal investigation is needed to ensure the tread is fixed correctly and that all stairs of similar design on site are examined and the tread securement improved to prevent a fall.

### Having the right attitude

Never take the attitude that a near miss is a fluke and will not happen again. If it happens once, it is likely to happen again. And next time could result in a serious accident. Report all near misses and ensure corrective action is taken.

Anyone have a question or comment about Near Misses? Please be sure to sign-in on the training certification form.

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# TOOLBOX TALK SIGN IN FORM

Toolbox Topic Covered: Near Misses - Recognizing the warning signs

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Training led by: \_\_\_\_\_

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