



## Toolbox Talk: Near Miss

### **Introduction/Overview:**

What is a near miss? According to an article by National Safety Council, “OSHA defines a [near miss](#) as an incident in which no property was damaged and no personal injury was sustained, but where, given a slight shift in time or position, damage or injury easily could have occurred.” We’ve all had that moment where we almost hit a pedestrian, almost fell down the steps, or slipped on that icy sidewalk but didn’t fall. Whether it was dumb luck, divine intervention, or a fortunate break in the chain of events that prevented you from being injured, what if the next person is not so lucky?

Near misses must be reported so the problem can be addressed to prevent injury or property damage. Often, during an accident investigation, someone will say something like, “Wow, I was lucky I didn’t get hurt when I did that!” If they had reported the hazardous condition or act, perhaps no one would have been injured.

### **Statistics:**

According to the National Safety Council, “[75 percent](#) of all accidents are preceded by one or more near misses.”

In 1931 Herbert William Heinrich wrote the book “Industrial Accident Prevention: A Scientific Approach,” Mr. Heinrich stated out of 330 accidents (today we call them incidents if no injury or property damage resulted), 300 will result in no injury, 29 will result in minor injury, and one will result in a significant injury. This came to be known as [Heinrich’s accident triangle or pyramid](#). An article from Safety+Health magazine states “While his theory and numbers have been questioned, he is credited with bringing attention to workplace safety and focusing on the human element of safety.”

### **Talking Points:**

Does your agency have a Near Miss reporting program? If so, is it easy to access?

Does management encourage the reporting of near misses?

Do you report all unsafe acts or conditions immediately?

Does your agency investigate a Near Miss with the same intensity as an actual accident?

Does your agency take action to eliminate the root cause so no injuries or damage will occur?

Developed by:

## Additional Discussion Notes:

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### Final Thoughts:

If you find yourself saying, “Whew, that was close!” after an incident, report the incident to your supervisor, safety officer, a member of the safety committee, or, if you can, remove the hazard. Doing so may prevent pain or death to someone else.

**NOTE:** Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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