

Investigating Accidents

OVERVIEW

The investigation of accidents and near misses is an essential part of the University's accident prevention program. A thorough investigation reconstructing the chain of events leading to an accident or near miss identifies unsafe acts and conditions requiring corrective action. An accident investigation and subsequent implementation of the corrective action minimizes the potential for future accidents.

INVESTIGATING MAJOR ACCIDENTS

Personnel from the offices indicated in *Table 1* below investigate major accidents resulting in death, serious injury (i.e., fractures, amputations) or in-patient hospitalization of WSU personnel and notify other appropriate University units and/or request assistance as needed.

Table 1

If Injured Persons are:	Investigating Office:	Contact Telephone:
Student nonemployees / Visitors	PRIMARY: Risk Management SECONDARY: EH&S	509-335-6893 during business hours; 208-835-8200 after business hours In Whitman County: 509-335-3041 during business hours; 911 after business hours Outside of Whitman County: 509-332-2521 (24 hours/day)
Residence hall occupants	Residence Life—Central Staff	509-339-0285
USDA-ARS employees	USDA-ARS Safety, Health, and Environmental Management Office	509-335-7766
All other employees (including student employees) / Volunteers	Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S)	In Whitman County: 509-335-3041 during business hours; 911 after business hours Outside of Whitman County: 509-332-2521 (24 hours/day)

Offices that investigate major accidents are responsible for ensuring that investigators are trained and that investigations are documented, in accordance with the University's Internal Investigations Training and Policy, *EP26*.

EXCEPTION: The USDA-ARS Safety, Health, and Environmental Management Office follows federal U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Worker's Compensation Program investigation requirements.

Non-Pullman Locations, All Injured Persons

The local Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) unit takes the lead in major accident investigations at non-Pullman locations and coordinates with appropriate WSU Pullman departments (see *Table 1*). If no EH&S staff are assigned to a specific location, the chief administrator assigns investigation responsibility to a trained local investigator and/or coordinates with Pullman departments.

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Law Enforcement

Law enforcement personnel may also investigate major accidents resulting in death or serious injury. When appropriate, law enforcement personnel may direct the removal of equipment from non-work-related accidents. (See [Preserving the Site](#) regarding removal of equipment from work-related accidents.)

INVESTIGATING WORK-RELATED ACCIDENTS

Responsibilities

Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S)

The local EH&S unit investigates all major accidents resulting in death, serious injury (i.e., fractures, amputations) or in-patient hospitalization of WSU personnel.

The local EH&S unit may investigate minor injury accidents and near misses.

Supervisor

The responsible supervisor conducts an investigation and completes a Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report when:

- An employee involved in a minor occupational accident is unable to work the subsequent full shift due to a resulting illness or injury, or
- The employee receives medical treatment, or
- Events and conditions involving a near miss or noninjury accident indicate there was a high probability of serious injury, illness or significant property damage.

Unit Administrator

The unit administrator is responsible for reviewing the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report and initiating and implementing corrective action to prevent accident reoccurrence.

The unit administrator may conduct an independent investigation if circumstances warrant.

Safety Committees

Safety committees may assist in the investigation of accidents and near misses. See *SPPM 2.12* for more about safety committees.

USDA Safety Office

The USDA Occupational Health and Safety Specialist from the USDA Safety Office investigates all major accidents resulting in death, serious injury (i.e., fractures, amputations) or in-patient hospitalization of USDA-ARS employees.

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Accident Investigation

Reporting	The supervisor, upon notification of an occupational injury or illness, reports the incident. See <i>SPPM 2.24</i> for reporting procedures.
<i>USDA-ARS Units</i>	USDA-ARS units follow federal U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Worker's Compensation Program reporting requirements.
Preserving the Site	The supervisor is to ensure that the accident site is preserved as it was when the accident occurred. Equipment involved in a major accident is not to be moved unless it is necessary for victim removal or accident prevention. An EH&S representative authorizes removal of equipment involved in a major accident.
Investigation	The supervisor is to immediately investigate a minor accident. The objective of an investigation is to determine the accident cause. After the cause is determined, the supervisor is to provide recommendations for corrective action to the unit administrator. The corrective actions should eliminate or minimize the potential of reoccurrence.
<i>Participants</i>	<p>Investigation participants may include the immediate supervisor of the injured employee, witnesses, an employee representative, and any other person with the special expertise to evaluate the facts relating to the cause of the accident.</p> <p>During the investigation the supervisor should interview injured or ill employees and witnesses.</p>
<i>Witness/Injured Person Statement</i>	<p>The injured person and witnesses must complete a Witness/Injured Person Statement. Complete and/or print the form master to obtain copies of the Witness/Injured Person Statement.</p> <p>Attach the Witness/Injured Person Statement to the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report.</p>
<i>Evaluation Factors</i>	Refer to the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report for factors to evaluate during an accident investigation.
Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report	<p>After the investigation and within 48 hours of the incident, the supervisor completes a Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report. Complete this form when one or more of the criteria listed under Supervisor applies.</p> <p>Obtain copies of the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report by completing and/or printing the form master.</p>

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Routing

The department routes the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report as follows:

- Original -- Human Resource Services (HRS) (mail code 1014)

Indicate the date of the Incident Report (see *SPPM 2.24*) and the name of the injured party.

Human Resource Services retains the original and forwards a copy of the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report and any other attachments to EH&S.

If applicable HRS forwards a copy of the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report to Risk Management Services.

- Copy -- Dean of Students, if the injured party is a student
- Copy -- Unit administrator
- Copy -- Unit safety committee chair

The safety committee reviews the incident and forwards any recommendations to the unit administrator.

- Copy -- Departmental office files

Assistance

Contact EH&S at 509-335-3041 if assistance is required in conducting an accident investigation or completing the report.