

A near miss is an event or hazard that does not result in injury, illness or damage, but had the potential to do so. Near misses must be reported, regardless of how severe, in order to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to prevent a recurrence in which serious injury or loss may occur.

Near misses happen in the construction industry on a regular basis. We can recognize near misses, and use them as a tool to change processes and prevent future incidents and serious injuries from happening. With proper reporting and investigation, these incidents should never reoccur.

### Examples of a Near Miss

- A worker not wearing the proper PPE for the job
- A worker not following proper procedures or safe work practices
- A person slips on ice, but does not fall or hurt themselves
- Tool malfunctions or misuse
- A tool that is dropped and lands beside another person
- A missing guard rail and a person nearly slips into the opening
- Using the top of the step ladder as a step
- Equipment nearly contacting overhead power lines
- Nearly hitting underground utilities or lines

### Accident Theory

Many safety practices are reactive and not proactive as they tend to happen after a near miss or loss has already occurred. We must be proactive in our approach to safety and help protect our most important assets: our employees.

There is a theory suggesting there is a ratio between the number of serious accidents compared to the number of near misses or close calls. This is called the Accident Pyramid.



In essence what the triangle portrays is that for every 600 near misses there are typically 30 property losses, 10 lost time accidents and one major accident. The top three levels are part of the reactive process of an accident where it is too late: damage has occurred and people are hurt.

Where focusing on the lowest level, the proactive process, it is an opportunity to make changes to a policy, procedure, practice, job task, habit, implement a new tool or PPE, or engineer a solution. Investigations of serious accidents often reveal earlier incidents of a similar nature that were dismissed.

### Why Investigate a Near Miss?

Part of a successful safety management program is to ensure near misses are reported and investigated. Near misses and resulting inspections will help prevent an injury or even a fatality.

How can an investigation take place if the near misses are not being reported? It is everyone's responsibility to report near misses. This way everyone gets to go home safe at the end of the day.

Implement a simple Near Miss Report like the [SCSA sample available online](#).

Discuss the near miss reports and findings each day in regularly scheduled meetings with employees from each shift. This is where you can obtain additional ideas or corrective actions: from the people that perform the work everyday.

Be proactive, conduct a risk assessment, think about your work, inspect your area, tidy up and report unsafe acts conditions and near misses.

**Just Think:** What if your employees reported five near misses this week, and then through your investigation, your team discovers three positive changes for each near miss. Through these investigations you are able to make 15 positive changes prior to damage occurring or anyone getting hurt.

The image shows a 'NEAR MISS/CLOSE CALL INCIDENT REPORT' form from the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA). The form includes sections for: 'What happened? Describe the sub-standard act or sub-standard condition observed', 'Contributing Causes (check all that apply)' with checkboxes for Planning Process, Environmental Conditions, Personal Protection, Task/Equipment Factors, and Personnel/Activities; 'Who was involved?' with checkboxes for Worker, Contractor or Sub-Trade, and Client; 'What is a Near Miss?' with a definition and a list of 'Types of Potential Causes'; and 'Weakness - These Rights' section.

# Tool Box Talk

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When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager's responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks.

Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: [www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks](http://www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks)

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: [www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool\\_Box\\_Meeting.pdf](http://www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf)

## About the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, nonprofit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.