

Why report?

Incident reports are a way for you to communicate important safety information and should be used by your employer to prevent future injuries.

Your employer must investigate why the incident occurred and document the investigation, outcome, all work changes or risk controls put in place as a result, and how this has been communicated to workers.

You also have both legal and professional obligations to report unsafe work and should complete your report as soon as the incident occurs or as soon as feasible.

Who sees the reports?

This varies based on your employer's internal processes and the severity of the incident but would generally include your manager and WHS manager.

In addition, there are circumstances where people called in to investigate unsafe work may access this information. This could include people like NSWNMA Officials and SafeWork NSW inspectors.

Need other WHS resources?

Go to
bit.ly/saferwork



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How to write a WHS incident report

Incident reporting is everyone's responsibility. You should be familiar with and follow incident reporting procedures in your workplace.



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How to write a good incident report

What situations should be reported?

All unsafe work is serious whether an injury occurs or not and should be reported to prevent future injuries.

This means you should report anything that has caused either physical or psychological harm or has the potential to cause physical or psychological harm.

Examples include:



Slips, trips and falls



Needlestick injuries



Violence and aggression (both physical and verbal)



Racist behaviour



Sexually inappropriate behaviour



Manual handling injuries



Infection control issues (e.g. appropriate PPE not available)



Unsafe staffing



Bullying



A GOOD REPORT IS COMPLETE

A complete report will cover the who, what, where, when, how and why. The emphasis placed on each of these questions will vary based on the type and complexity of the incident.

Who	Who is reporting the incident? Who is affected?
What	What happened? (Include incident type and de-identified details) What are the characteristics of the incident? What initial actions did you take? What is the incident severity rating at the time of the incident report?
Where	Where did the incident occur?
When	When did the incident occur?
How & Why	Why and how did the incident occur? What factors contributed?



A GOOD REPORT IS CONCISE

Include the important details but omit words that do not add value and interfere with readability.

E.g. Wordy – at this point in time, it has been determined necessary that we submit an incident report form.

Concise – we should submit an incident report.



A GOOD REPORT IS SPECIFIC

Vague reports don't give much information. Ensure the dates, times and content is specific.

e.g. Vague – the patient was aggressive. Code black called.

Specific – the patient used a dining chair to smash through the nurses' station window. Code black called, nil injuries.

In the vague example, we know something has occurred, but there is no information to assist in identifying changes that could be made to prevent incidents from reoccurring. In the specific example, we know to look at the suitability of the furniture (should it be replaced with weighted furniture?) and whether the glass in the nurses' station is fit for purpose or should be replaced with stronger glass.



A GOOD REPORT IS FACTUAL AND OBJECTIVE

Well-written incident reports are factual, fair and impartial. A fact is something real that can be proved or disproved. Opinions and inferences should be avoided.

e.g. Inference – he was under the influence of alcohol as his speech was slurred.

Factual/objective – blood tests confirmed the driver had a blood alcohol level that was twice the legal limit.

Opinion/subjective – the patient is an alcoholic.



A GOOD REPORT IS DE-IDENTIFIED WHERE APPROPRIATE

It is best to ensure information in incident reports is de-identified. Your employer should provide clear direction to this. If not, use initials rather than names e.g. Patient JS not Patient John Smith.



A GOOD REPORT IS LIGHT ON ABBREVIATIONS

Including standard abbreviations in incident reports is acceptable. However, using too many abbreviations or using them inappropriately can detract from your description and make it hard to understand, especially if they are being reviewed by a non-clinician.