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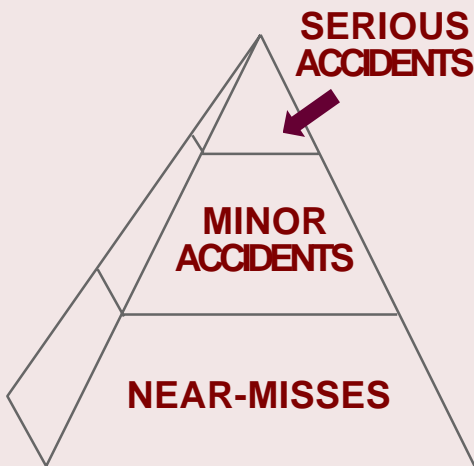
TreeWorker

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Preventing Accidents by Studying Near-Misses

The Heinrich Pyramid



Even though there's no injury and no damage to your equipment or the client's property, the so-called "near-miss" needs to be treated just as seriously. Why?

There is a saying among loss control specialists, "Incidence breeds Severity" Your parents understood this concept when they harped, "You're lucky, you could have put someone's eye out with that thing!" Many studies have shown that there is a statistical relationship between incidents and serious accidents. This idea was first published by a guy named Heinrich back in 1931, and it was called the Accident Pyramid. The illustration to the left shows what it looks like.

The exact ratios in the pyramid will vary depending on how accidents are defined, the cause of the accident, and the occupation or industry sector it is applied to. The important thing to remember is that there is ALWAYS some sort of pyramidal relationship between the "stupid stuff that happens", the "band aid injuries", and the really disastrous event.

Here's why a near-miss is such a great learning experience: except for the outcome, a near-miss resembles an accident in almost every other respect. It has the same direct cause, and very similar if not identical contributing factors, and the same root cause. If you can figure out what went wrong and correct

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the problems, you can prevent a serious incident.

There is one big flaw and one big danger in applying this theory: You can't assume that you'll have ten near-misses before you have your first accident, and ten accidents before your first serious one. In fact, the very first event could very well be the one that leads to the ambulance ride!

The Treeworker suggests that you accept a near miss as a lucky warning, and that you investigate near-misses with the same dedication and interest that you look at accidents. Can you identify the direct cause, the

indirect cause(s) and the contributing factor(s)? What conditions in the workplace, or actions by individuals, contributed? What fixes will you put in place that will prevent a similar, but injurious, event in the future? Work is part

of life, and life tends to throw stuff at you. It's how you react that's important.

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