

Every Reasonable Step:

Incident Management Software Promotes a Safe Workplace and Limits Liability

A serious workplace accident has occurred. Lives have changed, including yours. You must comfort co-workers, phone a family, visit the hospital, and deal with calls from reporters. In the following days you must stabilize the workplace atmosphere, deal with government and insurance investigators, and respond to newspaper editorials suggesting that your company has unsafe work conditions. Over the next months or years a bright light will be shone onto your company's performance and every action you have taken will be open to examination. How will you stand up under this scrutiny?

Government legislation has increased the liability of upper management to the point where incident management software has become a necessity. The principle of due diligence requires that management be able to demonstrate that they have taken *every reasonable step* to ensure the health and safety of employees. You must be able to prove to investigators that the equipment that failed had been properly maintained. You must show that the injured worker had been trained and tested on the correct use of the equipment, and given regular refresher courses. You must show that the use of provided safety equipment was enforced. You must be able to describe how the company undertook to reduce the potential dangers of the activity in question. Small or large, a company that fails to document its occupational safety activities leaves itself open to regulatory fines, higher insurance premiums, legal liability and even criminal prosecution.

It is no longer adequate to run to the binders after a serious accident takes place. The information there is not up to date. The person who was most familiar with the answers left the company last year. Paper records are hard to find, incomplete when found, and require time-consuming analysis. The accident has already happened – it's too late to find out there were obvious warning signs.

Immediate answers, backed up with authoritative reports containing hard data, convince questioners that management was on top of all safety issues. An investigation is headed off. This direct approach is the cornerstone of modern public relations: answer quickly, answer accurately, and provide more information than is asked for. If *any* information is found to be inaccurate later, all of it will be considered suspect.

Incident Management Software Increases Workplace Safety

Incident management software increases safety by highlighting "near miss" patterns. A series of small incidents, not apparently important by themselves, will show there is a problem. Perhaps workers are omitting safety precautions due to overconfidence, perhaps a part of their training has been forgotten, or perhaps they are being pushed to speed up their work. During the normal course of recording safety events, incident management software creates printable reports and graphs that highlight a problem. Management can address it proactively, before it results in a more serious accident.

Proactive management safety concerns create a climate that rewards good ideas. Often the best safety ideas come directly from the people who do the job. Everyone appreciates the chance to be heard. Initiating a brainstorming session with all staff in a problem area shows people that the company takes their safety, and their suggestions, seriously.

Easy-to-use Software Leads to Success

The return on a software investment is always dependent on employee buy-in. Buy-in is dependent on a few key requirements:

- The software must be easy to learn and simple to use.
- It must accommodate existing processes and add additional capabilities.

- The software must centralize and simplify mandatory record keeping and reporting.
- It must offer obvious improvements in efficiency as well as time savings for managers.
- Users must be able to see the benefits for their tasks.
- The data must be well organized and obviously contribute to the company's legal defences.

If the software appears difficult, employees may balk, particularly if they do not have a lot of computer experience. Well-designed software seems easy to use. Even when the activity pulls in a lot of information and many steps, step by step the user is led through the requirements. Properly designed data input pages offer a selection of commonly needed choices, while automatically rejecting errors.

Incident management software must allow the company to continue to track issues as they have in the past but with expanded capability and obvious improvements in efficiency and time savings. Users must immediately recognize that the benefits of centralized and simplified record keeping processes which can quickly analyze and retrieve data when required.

Employees will see the benefit of software that helps them do their jobs rather than adding a new layer of work to the old tasks. The incident management software should fit easily into the work flow. It should track all workplace incidents, work orders, safety notes, employee credentials, training records and company policies in one accessible location. Additional information that promotes safety can be captured and analysed in the normal course of work.

Incident management software reduce the time needed to generate paperwork such as government forms, OSHA Logs, workplace labels, graphs, statistics, training certificates, training due lists, work orders and other items. It can also track contractor training and insurance claims which cost your company money. All data required to establish a proper due diligence trail should be tracked and quickly available in the event of a legal challenge.

Comprehensive Software Provides Best ROI

Incident management software should be comprehensive, so the implementation of the software can easily be expanded from initial mission-critical records through other "nice to have" safety record-keeping features. Expansion should not require the purchase of additional modules.

The best ROI, or return on investment, is achieved when a motivated employee, seeing the value of his work, can implement improved recordkeeping without any practical hurdles. Having to make a business case for the purchase of the next module is a discouraging barrier to expanding success.

Setting up incident management software can be time consuming. The software should be able to import basic people data from common data formats to make use of existing records. The vendor should offer a service of importing historical data records to allow a quick, accurate picture of safety trends. If you operate with remote locations, the software should also import and export data from remote locations including those with no internet or computer network connection.

Additional Benefits for Management

At-a-glance incident and trend information is highly useful in allowing management to identify and deal with issues before they become problems. The management level of top-down information should be available in a central location for quick checks with the ability to generate detailed reports if desired. This easy quick-check for top management keeps health and safety concerns as a top priority before moving on to the core business at hand. Line safety managers who are juggling increasing responsibilities can find their workflow streamlined and time demands reduced by more efficient centralized record keeping. Standardizing data tracking and reporting across multiple company locations can result in substantial efficiencies and much more robust legal defences against Government fines and civil suits.



Reports on total insurance claims or outstanding disability statistics can be conveniently printed or emailed to management colleagues with notation. Confirmation that all employee or contractor licenses are current confirms that the company is not open to fines.

Computer recordkeeping make it possible to have a complete backup set of records stored offsite. In the event of a workplace evacuation, employee records can be queried. Safety records are accessible even before the building is. Existing and new disability claims can be initiated from a secondary location and added to the primary records at a convenient time. At the same time, managers are aware of employee status and pre-existing disabilities.

When incident management software has been implemented, workplace safety routines become less intimidating. Since a clear audit trail has been generated automatically, the information inspectors are looking for is already on hand. Damage and repair logs for key equipment are available, along with digital pictures for historical review. Your staff can prove that preventative maintenance is being done.

Even without considering the legal, moral and public relations issues involved in workplace safety, incident management software saves time and money in creating and storing necessary business documents. By implementing and supporting a cost-effective incident management software initiative, management helps demonstrate that they have taken every reasonable step towards improving workplace safety.