Handling Incidents

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Even with precautionary measures in place, accidents happen. When they do, it is important to conduct a thorough investigation and follow proper reporting procedures. Incidents provide an opportunity to learn about potentially unsafe practices and improve your restaurant's operations.

Prevention is the most important goal of an investigation. You may be able to prevent recurring incidents by correcting procedures and improving conditions, and then teaching everyone the correct procedures.

Essential Investigation Points

When you investigate an incident, do so logically. Attempt to determine the cause(s) of an incident. Focus on essential points.

- ✓ How did the incident take place?
- ✓ Why did it occur?
- ✓ Who was involved in the incident?
- ✓ What can be done to prevent a similar incident from recurring?

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Benefits of a Thorough Investigation

A thorough investigation often results in many benefits:

- ✓ It may prevent incident recurrence.
- ✓ It reveals the possible causes of operational interruptions and indicates possible corrective action.
- ✓ It eliminates economic losses resulting from possible damaged tools, machines, and materials.
- ✓ It creates an awareness of areas to consider.
- ✓ It may reveal how methods and procedures can be improved.

When You Need to Conduct an Investigation

You or a member of the management team should conduct an investigation immediately after any incident occurs. Immediate investigation provides far better results because the facts are still fresh in the minds of the witnesses and those involved in the incident. Witnesses will not have time to talk and influence one another's thinking. The physical conditions of the incident stay the same and people are still available to discuss what happened. Moreover, crew members and customers feel a true sense of management concern when the incident is immediately investigated.

Investigations Reduce Claim Frequency

Studies have shown that investigation also results in a substantial decrease in claim frequency. Through investigation, the cause of an incident may be determined, potentially reducing the risk of a similar incident recurring.

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What to Investigate

Explore as many details as necessary to uncover the root cause of the incident. Details could include:

- ✓ Practices utilized. Was there a departure from an accepted, normal, or correct procedure?
- ✓ Physical conditions. Was there a physical issue with equipment or tools?
- ✓ Incident source. Were there any tools, materials, or equipment involved?
- ✓ Type of incident. How was the person affected or what damage occurred?
- ✓ Part of body affected. Which part(s) of the body is the subject of complaint?
- ✓ Personal factor. What was the reason for the person's unsafe action or practice?

Whom to Interview and How

Interview all crew members or customers involved immediately following the incident. Follow these basic guidelines when interviewing those involved and those who witnessed the incident.

- ✓ Put the person at ease. Emphasize prevention as your goal.
- ✓ Interview at the scene of the incident, if possible.
- ✓ Ask for the person's version of the incident. Let the person speak without interruption.
- ✓ Ask only necessary questions. Avoid "why" questions to avoid defensiveness.
- ✓ Repeat the person's story as you understand it. This assures the person that you understand clearly what happened and allows the person to correct any mistakes, if necessary.
- ✓ Close the interview on a positive note of prevention. This reaffirms the purpose of the interview and sets the tone for the rest of your investigation

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Insurance Claims

You will have more accurate information with which to evaluate the cause of an incident if you report the claim promptly. When accurate and detailed information is sent to an insurance carrier immediately, claims are more accurately evaluated and costs are reduced. **Claim costs increase significantly** when claims are reported more than 3 days after the accident occurred.

Benefits of Prompt Reporting

- ✓ Reduces fear and anxieties of those affected by the incident
- ✓ Assures proper medical attention and future medical direction
- ✓ Creates earlier return-to-work results
- ✓ Eliminates hidden costs of workers' compensation
- ✓ Initiates case management

Report All Incidents within 24 Hours

Report any incident at your restaurant within 24 hours. Reporting incidents within 24 hours ensures that the injured employee will get the care they need as quickly as possible, and also, that further investigations may be performed. Also, corrective action can be accessed and shared with other locations. It is important that corrective action is shared, so as to prevent similar incidents from occurring.

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