

## What Causes Incidents and How to Avoid Them

The starting point in determining how to prevent injuries in the workplace is looking at what causes them in the first place. What creates the carelessness of employees that leads to common and preventable injuries? We refer to these injury occurrences as *incidents*. They are often the effect of becoming injured from a “recognized hazard” or dangerous conditions we are likely to encounter at work yet don’t properly avoid.

Incidents differ from accidents, which are events that happen unexpectedly and unintentionally, from unforeseen sources, and typically result in damage or injury. Under the OSHA General Duty Clause, municipalities are required to provide a place of employment free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees. With that in mind, let’s review what causes careless incidents in the workplace:

- **Complacency** – When you have been performing a job function for a long time, you may begin to think that you know all there is to know about it. You begin to perform tasks on auto-pilot, take shortcuts, and create unsafe conditions which can lead to injuries.
- **Emotions** – It is human nature to get angry or upset when things go wrong on the job, home, or even when driving your vehicles. There are understandable emotions which can distract a person from performing their work safely, and leads to careless mistakes.
- **Fatigue** – When a worker is tired, their physical and mental reaction times slow down. They have trouble paying attention and don’t recall how to get things done safely. Of course, you can’t always prevent being tired, but you can be aware of your fatigue. Understand how it can impede your performance so you can take corrective steps to be careful at work. Steps that include slowing down, asking for assistance, taking a break, or switching to a task that does not require as much precision or caution.
- **Lack of Knowledge** – Many times, after a major workplace incident, OSHA will cite as a partial cause – “lack of employee awareness or knowledge.” This comes down most often to a lack of training. Managers need to review training programs routinely, when new equipment is introduced, when processes change, and when new staff are hired. Improving employee knowledge will make them safer and more productive in the workplace.
- **Recklessness** – Do you think you know it all and can avoid standard safety rules, to get the job done quicker, without regard to the safety of others? This is reckless behavior that is likely to lead to personal injury.

For more information on what causes accidents in the workplace, contact the Comp Alliance Risk Management department and Robert Blaisdell, Director of Loss Control at [rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com](mailto:rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com)