



Learning from Mistakes

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” is a quote attributed to philosopher George Santayana. This statement is true of most educational undertakings, including the risk management field. If you think about it, nearly every single code, regulation, or safety standard ever written originates from an initial incident. Something caused an injury, fire, or explosion which gave pause to safety specialists to say, “We need to institute a rule to prevent this incident and subsequent injuries from happening again.” Therein lies the beginning of safety standard development.

The origins of many school district security measures derived from the study of the 1999 incident in Columbine, Colorado, and New York state municipal regulations on safety and workplace violence improved because of the 1992 incident in Schuylar County. Lessons have been learned from the unfortunate violent incidents in school districts and municipal centers since.

Similarly, Comp Alliance members can take account of their workplace injuries and implement corrective actions to ensure that incidents don't reoccur. As a risk management department, we focus on assisting our members in avoiding workplace injuries through diligent safety inspections and training programs. However, we understand that incidents contributing to employee injuries may arise.

When a work-related injury occurs, an investigation will follow. They can take a few minutes, hours, days, or weeks but, ultimately, they are in place to understand the cause and get that condition corrected to mitigate the loss and prevent further injuries. The investigation, therefore, is part of the learning process of the incident.

Mitigation is the part of a post-accident investigation intended to correct the unsafe condition. It may be necessary to implement one, two, or several controls. Mitigation might look like re-training an employee, repairing or retrofitting equipment, improving facility security, or adding personal protective equipment.

Understanding the likelihood of workplace injuries and learning from these incidents will go a long way in contributing to a workplace free of known hazards where workers utilize situational awareness to avoid injuries to themselves and others.