

3. Establish Cause

When trying to establish the cause of an incident, it is important to be open-minded, and not settle on the first or most obvious cause. If an employee was injured after slipping on a greasy residue, the obvious cause of the injury would be a slip hazard. However, you must also consider, for example, whether they were wearing appropriate footwear, why the residue hadn't been cleared up, if the area was suitably lit to allow the hazard to be seen, and so on. There are often multiple contributing factors that result in an incident occurring – all of which should be addressed in steps four and five.

4. Identify Solutions

Once an incident has been thoroughly investigated, and its causes identified, the next step is to determine the preventative measures that need to be implemented in order to avoid recurrence of the same circumstances. Continuing the slip example, possible measures could include enforcing stricter housekeeping procedures, delegating particular employees the responsibility to undertake regular checks of pertinent areas, improving lighting and evaluating the footwear worn by employees and its appropriateness to the environment. Consider how effective a solution will be as a quick, inexpensive fix may not offer a sufficiently protective, longer-term solution.

5. Implement Measures

Having identified the solutions that will be most effective in preventing recurrence, the final step is to implement those measures, with time 'of the essence'. As your business will likely continue to be operational during the investigation process, your employees will continue to be exposed. Furthermore, in addition to implementing the measures, debrief your employees, educating them as to what they can do to avoid a similar incident occurring, as well as sharing the steps you have taken to protect them. They will likely have concerns and it is imperative, as their employer, to demonstrate your commitment to protecting them and making their workplace a safer one.

Finally, ensure you monitor the situation to assess whether your measures have been successful in reducing the risk. If not, return to step four.

In each case contact is to be made with the resident Health & safety consultant.