Goals: This safety session teaches employees to:

- Identify and report near misses.
- Cooperate with near-miss investigations.
- Help prevent near misses and accidents.

Applicable Regulations: None

1. What Is a Near Miss?

- A near miss is an incident in which an accident and injury could have happened—but didn’t.
- It is a warning that something is wrong and needs to be fixed.
- Safety experts believe that many accidents are preceded by one or several near misses.
- The difference between a near miss and an accident could be a fraction of an inch or a split second in time. For example:
  - A worker misses being run over by a forklift by a few inches.
  - A worker steps away from a rack of shelves seconds before a heavy object falls and lands right where he was standing.
- If the hazards that cause near misses are not corrected, eventually there will be an accident, and someone could be injured.

2. What Causes Near Misses?

- Near misses are caused by the same kinds of workplace hazards that cause actual accidents:
  - Unsafe conditions, *and/or*
  - Unsafe acts.
- Of the two, unsafe acts cause many more near misses and accidents than unsafe conditions.
- In other words, mistakes people make and risks they take cause most safety problems.
  - That means you and your coworkers have the power to prevent near misses and accidents.
- Even hazards that don’t seem too important—like a spill on the floor or a small shock when you use electrical equipment—could result in an accident or injury.
  - Don’t ignore them!

3. What Should You Do if You Have a Near Miss?

- Heed the warning of a near miss, and take every near miss as seriously as if it were an actual accident.
- Report all near misses to your supervisor immediately.
- Don’t be afraid you’ll be blamed or penalized for the incident.
  - By reporting near misses, you are doing a positive, safe thing and likely preventing an accident that could injure you or a coworker.
● The sooner you report a safety problem, the sooner it can be fixed.
● Too often after a near miss, people think, “Thank goodness! This must be my lucky day,” and forget about the incident.
   – That’s a serious mistake you don’t want to make.

4. Why Do Near Misses Have to Be Investigated?
● Every near miss must be examined to find out what happened and why.
● Only by identifying root causes of near misses can similar incidents be prevented in the future.
● If you are involved in a near miss, cooperate in the investigation and think about the circumstances that might have contributed to the incident. For example:
   – Was it associated with a particular time, place, material, or piece of equipment?
   – Was a safety precaution overlooked, or did someone take a shortcut to save time?

5. What Can You Do to Prevent Near Misses?
● Keep alert for hazards while you work and as you move around the workplace.
● Follow safety rules and wear required personal protective equipment.
● Report any hazards you see anywhere in the workplace to a supervisor right away.
   – If you can do so safely, remove the hazard—but still report it.
● Participate in safety training and use the information and skills you learn on the job.
● Cooperate with coworkers to keep your work area clean, neat, and safe.
● Speak up if you see a coworker taking risks; don’t accept unsafe behavior.
● Make safety—yours and your coworkers’—a priority every workday.

Discussion Points:
– Lead a discussion about near misses that have occurred in areas where participants work. What happened? How could the near miss have been prevented? What can be done to make sure there is not a future accident?

Conclusion: Near Misses Are Accidents Waiting to Happen
Identifying and reporting near misses means that they can be investigated, and the hazards that caused them can be corrected to prevent more near misses or a future accident or injury.

Test Your Knowledge
Have your employees take the Near Misses quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their ability to identify and report near misses and whether they need to review this important topic again soon.