

5 Whys Tool - A simple approach that can be used in straight forward cases.

It is important to understand that the why questions are not independent but each question must apply to the last answer and in the context of the actions taken or omitted rather than any physical or chemical properties.

For example: A small explosion occurred in the laboratory.

Why 1. Incompatible chemicals were mixed together in the reaction vessel.

Why 2. The post-grad student was unaware that the chemicals were incompatible.

Why 3. The SDS had not been consulted.

Why 4. The post-grad student was unaware of Chemwatch and how to access it.

Why 5. Lack of appropriate information, instruction and training.

A single incident or near miss might more than one '5 Why' analysis, especially if there were multiple factors that were key contributors to the incident.

The 5 Whys done well can provide a quick and simple approach to determining the root causes or key factors involved in an incident/near miss.

5 WHYS		
<i>Example: What happened? The vehicle will not start – THE PROBLEM 1. Why? The battery is dead – FIRST WHY 2. Why? The alternator is not functioning – SECOND WHY 3. Why? The alternator belt has broken – THIRD WHY 4. Why? The alternator belt was well beyond its useful service life and not replaced – FOURTH WHY 5. Why? The vehicle was not maintained according to the recommended service schedule – FIFTH WHY, A ROOT CAUSE. Note: Sometimes there may be more than one root cause.</i>		
What happened?		
1. Why?		
2. Why?		
3. Why?		
4. Why?		
5. Why? i.e. root cause/s		
✓ Based on the above 5 Why analysis, tick the most appropriate factors/causes that would have contributed to the Direct causes identified.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Failure of process to provide information, instruction and training	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor Housekeeping	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to appropriately maintain plant/equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate conduct or behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to follow safe work procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure/facilities not fit for the activity being undertaken
<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to appropriately supervise	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to report incidents	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to identify hazard
<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to appropriately manage/control contractors	<input type="checkbox"/> Plant/Equipment/Materials not fit for purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to appropriately assess a hazard (conduct an effective risk assessment)
<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to effectively control a hazard	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: (please specify):	