



UNISAFE

TIP OF THE WEEK #12

Quick Full Investigations

A “full investigation” does not necessarily mean time consuming. It always depends on the complexity of the incident and risk involved. Given the University rarely has puzzling incidents that require sophisticated and detailed analysis. The majority of evidence for an investigation can be collected if

- You have an understanding of the area/environment where the incident occurred. *Attending the scene/area is the quickest way to do this.* Photos don't always show you everything.
- You *speak to the key people involved*. Email is always the slowest option. The quicker you can speak to the worker/s involved and their supervisor or the area supervisor the quicker you will be done.

When attending the scene/area and speaking to the people involved HSWOs need to be looking for information and evidence that tells them the following

1. What the circumstances or conditions were that lead up to the incident.

This is essential for identifying the safe systems of work that were in place for the whole task/activity, who was present and what controls were in place. Only the workers doing the task/activity and who were present can answer this. HSWOs need to speak to the worker - either in person or by telephone.

2. How the incident occurred/unfolded.

HSWOs need enough information so they can picture and understand exactly how the incident occurred

3. What level of hazard management was in place.

Attending the scene for some incidents is the only way this can be done quickly. Workshops and Laboratories should have RA's and SOP's that can be produced. Photographing the area will record what signage and other controls are in place. It is not unreasonable to expect a RA/SOP - if it is claimed one exists - to be produced the same day.

Gathering evidence and standards of proof

Where risks are lower such that we did not expect an injury/illness and if one did occur, treatment was very minor (first Aid) - HSWOs should be able to rely on the assurances of supervisors/managers. This means that

- HSWOs can accept verbal confirmations on the circumstances that led up to the incident, how it occurred and the level of hazard management that was in place.
- HSWOs do not need to verify or test that statements provided can be confirmed in the workplace or by the workers involved.

This means that A Full Investigation for a lower risk incident where no risk assessment are required and the actions taken will prevent another occurrence should be completed in 10-15 minutes once you have gathered all your information/evidence. The time it takes to fill out the [HSW Investigation Template](#)

Where risks are higher such that there is an expectation that an injury/illness can occur if it is not controlled & if there was an injury/illness treatment would be significant i.e. medical treatment - our level of inquiry and the evidence sought needs to be exacting. This means that

- Where a risk assessment is required in accordance with Appendix A of the [Hazard Management Chapter](#) or needs to be modified/reviewed a copy must be uploaded to the incident.
- Controls required by a Risk Assessment need to be verified that they were implemented and effective at the time of the incident by HSWOs. This means looking at CCTV, interviewing workers, visiting the scene.
- Where training in a proficiency (level 2) is required, details of the training and evidence of its completion should be obtained.

Completing a full investigation for lower & higher risk incidents in a timely manner depends on the skill of the HSWOs and how they work. The quicker an investigation starts, the less time it usually takes. Investigations via email correspondence add weeks to any investigation and we should avoid them.