

3

CRITICAL STEPS

An effective incident reporting process

Empowering your workforce to report
and respond to WHS incidents

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The purpose of this eBook is to help you upgrade or refine your incident reporting process, so it's easy for your workers to report an incident or hazard. Help build a culture in your organisation where all WHS incidents are quickly logged, actioned, and investigated. A culture that extends right up to the top where management communicates the response and corrective actions back to affected workers.

To help you do this, our eBook focuses on three important issues:

- 1. Barriers to incident reporting**
Why your workers aren't reporting incidents.
- 2. Key aspects of effective incident reporting**
What an effective incident reporting system looks like.
- 3. Upgrading your incident reporting system**
How to immediately improve incident and hazard management at your workplace.

1

Barriers to incident reporting

No matter what system, your #1 priority is to get your people to report the incidents and hazards they encounter

Barriers to incident reporting

So, before we start unpacking what an effective incident reporting system looks like, let's spend a few moments discussing why people might let a hazard slide by.

(A) They think its not their responsibility

One of the main reasons people don't report incidents is because they don't know they have to. Either it hasn't been properly explained to them, or they think it's up to someone else. The duty to report dangerous incidents, injuries, near-misses, and workplace hazards should be written into everyone's job description (or work contract), then clearly outlined during inductions and on-the-job training.

(B) They are afraid to report

The second barrier to incident reporting is fear. Some workers don't want to speak up about an incident (or injury) if they've made a mistake or scared they'll get into trouble. This is especially true if you've built a culture that treats WHS incidents as a drain on resources or an interruption to efficiencies.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rewarding your staff and contractors for injury-free days often has the reverse effect on your incident reporting system. Staff who report an incident may be bullied by co-workers who are angry about losing an incentive payment — or unit managers may simply bury information so they don't lose their department's 'accident-free' reputation.

(C) The process is too complex

People are less likely to report incidents when the system is so complicated they don't understand what to do. Long complex forms, multiple layers of reporting, and the use of high-tech terms or acronyms can be off-putting for people in any area of the business.

Multiple reporting layers

Does this sound like incident reporting at your workplace?

A young contractor has just noticed the cutting guard on an angle-grinder is loose and faulty. The hazard may not be reported if the young worker has to:

1ST

Go and get a paper incident report form from the office.

2ND

Read a detailed procedure (written in academic language) that explains how to fill out the form

3RD

Fill out a 4-page document that contains a large number of fields and classification check boxes

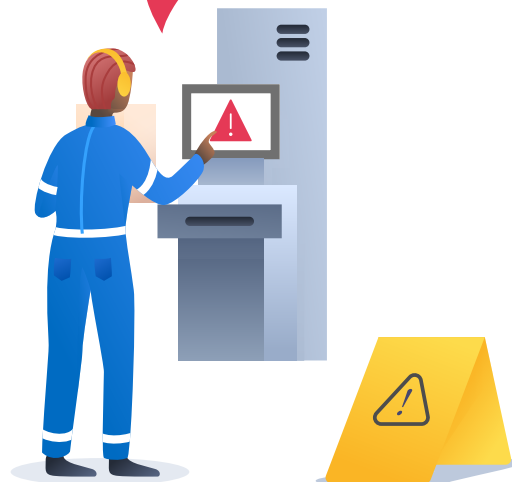
4TH

Read another detailed procedure that explains how (and where) to lodge the report

5TH

Scan or photograph the form, then email to 3 different people

And even if the contractor actually fills out the incident form, you might find they merely tick the check boxes without providing any clear description of the problem.



(D) They have no time

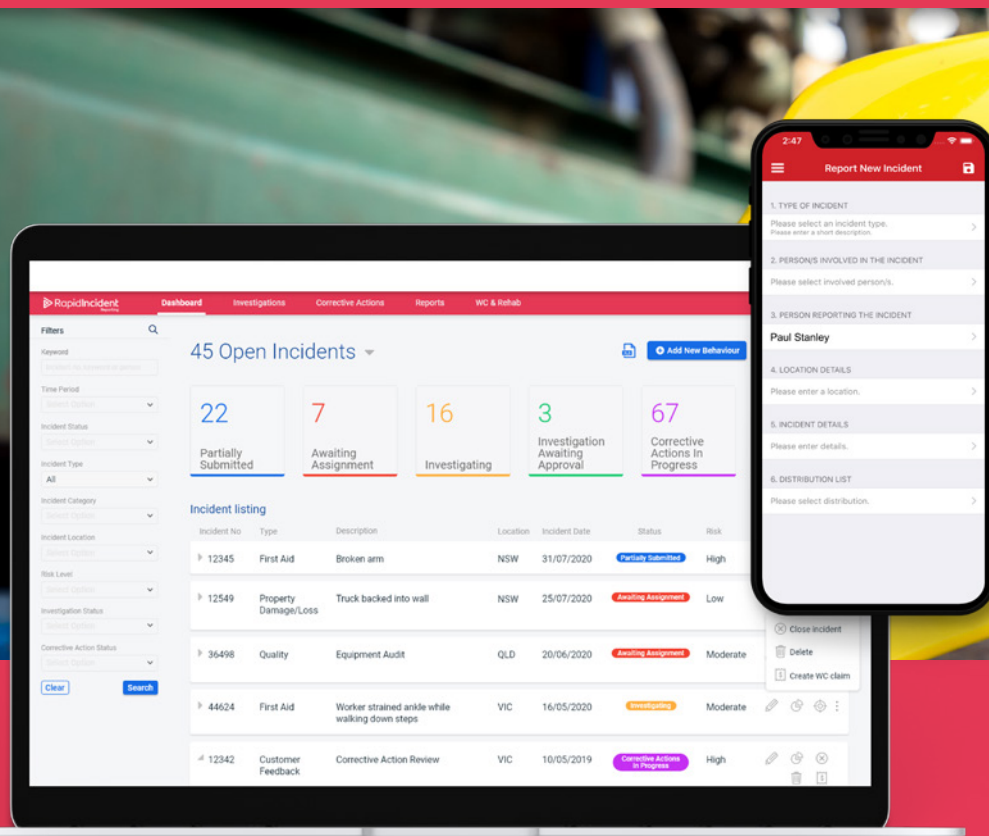
Some incident reporting systems place all the responsibility on 1 or 2 people to issue forms, log in users and collate responses. Very often these key people are line supervisors and departmental managers who already have a huge administrative workload. When their department is short-staffed (or facing an unprecedented production increase), incident reports move to the bottom of the pile.

(E) They feel it's a waste of time

Would you fill out an incident report if you felt it was a waste of your time? When workers feel that management aren't investigating incidents or responding to hazards, they lose faith and abandon the system.

REMEMBER:

Apart from having a legal duty to consult with your workers on WHS matters, active communication across all areas of the business boosts morale and makes safety 'the thing we do around here'.



2

Key aspects of effective incident reporting



Key aspects of effective incident reporting

(✓) Systemise your approach

An incident (and hazard) management system must be more than a paper form issued by the duty manager. To be truly effective, you'll need a full set of procedures that cover the reporting, response, investigation, and corrective action phases — and are made clear to the relevant people in your organisation. This includes contractors.

It's especially important to have a clear process for workers who first encounter an incident or hazard. You want your people to know that personal safety, assisting the injured, and securing the scene will always have priority over filling out the report.

Lifecycle of an incident or hazard

Check your existing procedures against our generic example.

i. **Initial Response**

- ▶ Taking immediate action to eliminate the hazard (if possible) and ensure the health and safety of everyone in the immediate area.
- ▶ Assisting the injured and contacting emergency services.
- ▶ Preserving the scene.

ii. **Reporting**

- ▶ Recording the incident or hazard as soon as practicable, but within 48 hours.
- ▶ Notifying appropriate managers and line personnel of the incident/hazard.
- ▶ Advising the WHS Regulator of a notifiable incident.

iii. **Management Response**

- ▶ Shutting down work areas and machinery.
- ▶ Gathering evidence and documentation.
- ▶ Carrying out emergency repairs.

iv. **Investigation**

- ▶ Appointing an investigation team.
- ▶ Inspecting the incident scene and relevant work areas.
- ▶ Interviewing witnesses.
- ▶ Collating incident documents.
- ▶ Establish root causes.

v. **Corrective Actions**

- ▶ Carrying out risk assessments.
- ▶ Following the Hierarchy of Controls.
- ▶ Choosing control measures.
- ▶ Assigning control measures and corrective action to relevant personnel.

vi. **Monitoring/Close**

- ▶ Monitoring the effectiveness of control measures.
- ▶ Closing an incident that has been fully investigated and actioned.
- ▶ Closing a hazard that has been eliminated.

(✓) Make it cloud-based

Cloud-based incident management is undoubtedly the most reliable and efficient system available to you right now. Every hazard, injury, WHS incident or near-miss is logged into the system and the data is stored securely in the cloud.

Once logged, information about a hazard (or the progress of an incident) can be made available to anyone who has a desktop computer, smartphone, or tablet + internet access. Even better, the case file remains active until closed — so it cannot be ignored.

Benefits of incident reporting in the cloud

- ▶ **NO** Paper forms getting lost or thrown away.
- ▶ **NO** Single access spreadsheets that become obsolete when the file owner leaves the company.
- ▶ **NO** “But I thought Joe reported the incident.”
- ▶ **NO** Hidden or buried information.
- ▶ **YES** Logging an incident (or hazard) in the field with a smartphone.
- ▶ **YES** Instant notifications to key people as incidents and hazards are logged or updated.
- ▶ **YES** Easy configuration for different user privileges and notification levels.
- ▶ **YES** Real-time (and historical) reports for the lifecycle of the incident or hazard.

A cloud-based system has so many amazing benefits, but we think the standout is end-to-end incident management — meaning every phase in the lifecycle of the incident (or hazard) is accessible to users, all in one place.



RapidIncident

Reporting

Empowering
your workforce.

SCENARIO: Benefits of online incident reporting software

Does your incident management system allow real-time updates?

Jessica is a healthcare worker at a nursing home in rural Victoria. The nursing home is part of a large group of aged care facilities with a head office in Sydney. The company uses a cloud-based incident management system.

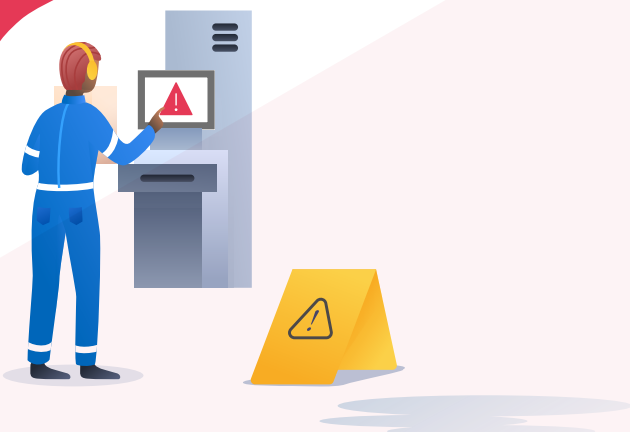
One morning while Jessica is transferring a patient, a mechanical lifting aid malfunctions. Jessica is injured and the lifting aid is unusable. After attending to the patient and roping off the lifting machine, Jessica logs all the details into the company's incident management software — using an app on her smartphone).

The incident response progresses as follows:

- ▶ HSE Manager at head office (plus the manager of the nursing home) are immediately notified of the incident.
- ▶ Nursing home manager immediately assigns an internal maintenance worker to inspect the lifting aid.
- ▶ Maintenance worker receives a push notification on his/her smartphone, asking him/her to inspect the lifting aid as a matter of urgency.
- ▶ Upon inspection, the maintenance worker realises the lifting aid needs to be repaired by a qualified technician. He/she flags the machine 'out of service', organises

a service technician, and updates the incident management system with the upcoming service date.

- ▶ Nursing home manager is instantly notified that the lifting aid is under repair.
- ▶ During a safety review a week later, the HSE Manager at head office notices that nothing has been updated in the system about the lifting aid. They contact the manager at the nursing home to follow up.
- ▶ Nursing home manager investigates and discovers the service technician is waiting on a part and the system is updated with the new repair date.
- ▶ Three days later the lifting aid is repaired, tested and put back in service. Maintenance worker updates the system with information about the cause of the malfunction — the failure of a bearing.
- ▶ A compliance officer at head office uses the information from the original report to record Jessica's injury in the worker's compensation register.
- ▶ HSE Manager closes the incident and all parties are notified.
- ▶ The case file remains in the system and will be flagged if a similar incident happens in the future.



(✓) Keep it Simple

If you want your people to report incidents and hazards, make it easy for them. Many incident reporting systems are designed for the compliance team who track safety data and injury statistics — rather than the workers on the ground who are actually reporting safety issues.

The best systems have a sophisticated backend, but are incredibly simple to use. They should allow:

- ▶ Both employees and external contractors to access the reporting system from anywhere and at anytime.
- ▶ Workers to record the details of an incident or hazard with a smartphone — at the scene.
- ▶ Departmental managers to assign corrective actions for hazards in their area of control.
- ▶ Dashboard views plus detailed action logs for HSE Management.

DID YOU KNOW?

Incident management software can be configured to allow different levels of visibility and user access.

(✓) Encourage a incident reporting culture

The most effective systems empower workers at all levels to fix safety issues and hazards within their area of control. Imagine the young apprentice (from our example in section 1.C) actually repairing the cutting guard on the angle grinder, then logging the fault into the system.

This type of culture doesn't happen overnight, rather it evolves with consistent training and support from management. Safety becomes part of the daily conversation and people have a clear understanding that incident reporting is fundamental to the elimination of hazards and unsafe work practices.

Evolving your incident reporting culture

Which of the following scenarios is most resembles the reporting culture at your workplace?

Carl slips over on a wet floor (from an unknown source) and hurts his wrist. No-one else is around and his hand doesn't hurt that much.

SCENARIO 1:

- ▶ Carl quickly leaves the area without saying anything to anyone.

SCENARIO 2:

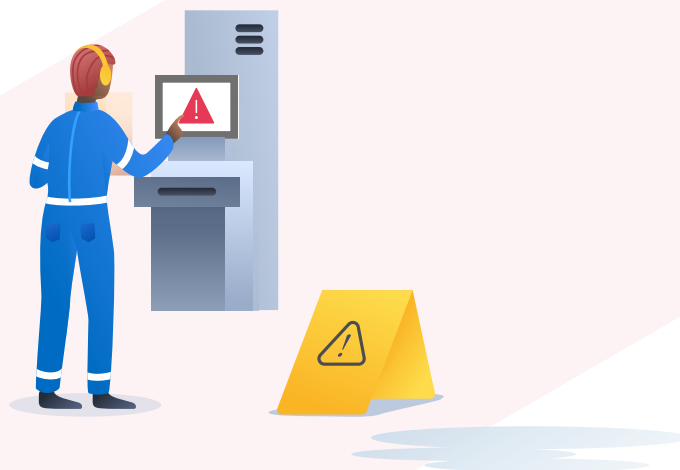
- ▶ Carl mops up the water but doesn't mention the fall.

SCENARIO 3:

- ▶ Carl mops up the water, ropes off the area (because the floor is still wet), and reports the sprain (as well as the wet floor hazard) to his supervisor.

SCENARIO 4:

- ▶ Carl ropes off the area, investigates the source of the water and finds it is a leaking tap. He mops up the water then logs the sprained wrist, wet floor, and leaking tap into the WHS incident reporting system (using his unique login details).



(✓) Be responsive

The whole point of an incident and hazard reporting system is to identify problem areas, then carry out investigations into why they happened. But it's not enough to just investigate the root cause of a dangerous chemical spill — your workforce needs to know you're doing it. People are far more likely to report an incident or hazard when they see direct action, every time a report is submitted.

Cloud-based reporting enables full transparency

Can you easily share the progress of incident (or hazard) investigations with your workforce?

Paper-based system	Cloud-based system
WHS Reps and the safety committee need to be manually notified by email or memo about the status of a hazard.	WHS Reps and committee members can receive push notifications or instant email updates as a hazard is investigated and actioned.
People are only updated when a manager releases an official announcement.	System users have real-time access to the status of hazards in their work areas.
Paper forms are easily lost or destroyed.	Logged incidents and hazards remain active until closed by a senior staff member. Once in the system, they can't be ignored.

(✓) Be inclusive

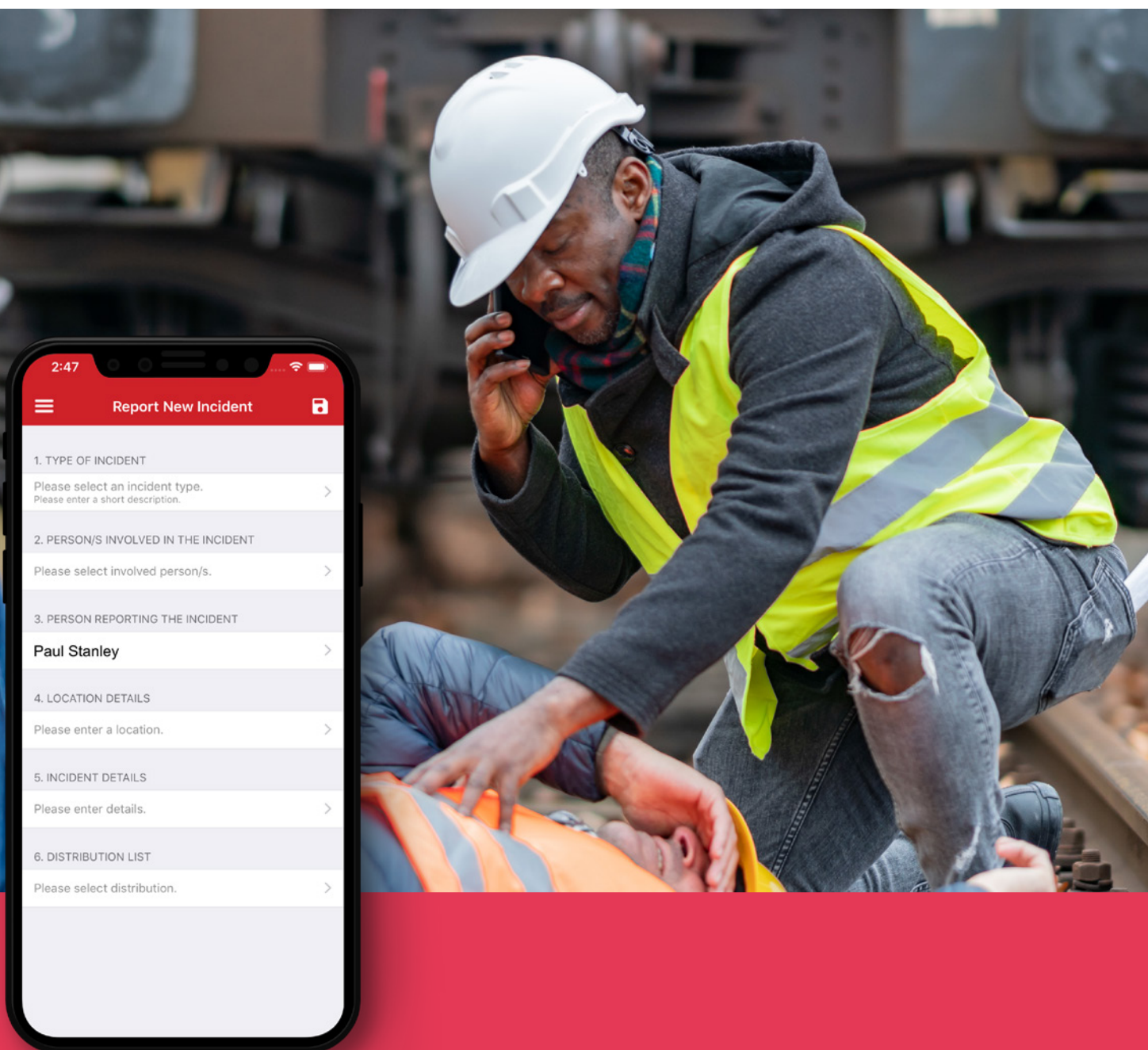
Don't pin the responsibility for incident and hazard reporting on one or two people. The best systems ensure everyone at the workplace:

- ▶ Knows how to use the system.
- ▶ Has direct access to the report forms, app, or software.
- ▶ Independently completes incident reports and logs hazards.
- ▶ Receives updates about hazards and safety issues that affect them.

Move away from interdependent reporting

Can your workers report incidents and hazards independently?

Systems that require an employee or contractor to verbally report an incident to their supervisor — **who then files the incident report on their behalf** — place unnecessary stress on both parties. The worker may feel intimidated when reporting an incident that involves their co-worker, and the supervisor can easily change (or delete) information to suit their own agenda.



3 Upgrading your incident reporting system

Are you keen to improve incident management at your workplace?

This section suggests four action areas when upgrading your own reporting systems. When we talk about 'upgrading', what we actually mean is streamlining the process so that 100% of your workforce is actively using the system. This includes management, general staff, and contractors.



(✓) Have a process

You don't have to turn your organisation into a paper-weighted bureaucracy, but you do need step-by-step procedures that detail every phase of the reporting and investigation process.

As a minimum, you'll require:

Documented Process:

- ▶ Develop a master guide that documents every step in the process. This will be used by HSE and senior management, then kept on-file for compliance purposes. Master guides use technical terms and acronyms, and usually include detailed flowcharts and process diagrams.

Operational Guides:

- ▶ Translate your master guide into a series of working procedures. These will be used by supervisors, departmental managers, and WHS representatives to instruct the employees and contractors within their reach. Operational guides break down the master guide into smaller chunks, and will be the basis of future training modules.

Updated Job Descriptions:

- ▶ Put incident reporting into job descriptions and make it clear that these duties are part of the terms and conditions of employment/contract.

User Accounts:

- ▶ If you are using incident reporting software, make sure everyone in the organisation has a user account and can access the system via website or app.

(✓) Encourage System Champions

Identify key workers to become system champions. These are the people who quickly adapt to change, and will enthusiastically 'sell' better operational procedures to their co-workers.

You'll gain the most benefit by identifying system champions early and including them in the planning and rollout stages. Make sure they receive intensive training on all aspects of the new system, and are allocated time away from their regular duties to on-board their co-workers.

(✓) Provide training

Your incident reporting system will be so much more effective if everyone in the organisation has received proper training. Training can be delivered during induction, software on-boarding, departmental meetings, and online refresher sessions.

Incident training modules can include videos, screen grabs, PDF guides, and face-to-face sessions with a supervisor or system champion. Make sure you detail:

Benefits of the system:

- ▶ How the system will improve working conditions and safety at the job site. Include actual examples of past incidents at the workplace

Legal responsibilities:

- ▶ Workers should understand that information about injuries, dangerous incidents and near-misses is required under WHS and worker compensation laws.

Individual job roles:

- ▶ Actual responsibilities according to a worker's job description. This will be different for employees, contractors, line supervisors, departmental managers, and senior management. Senior managers also need training if using software.

How-to-guides:

- ▶ Technical guides for different phases of the incident lifecycle and cloud-based systems usually include an online help area and training videos.

(✓) Keep monitoring

The 'set and forget' approach doesn't work with incident reporting. Our final suggestion is to consistently monitor the way your people are using the system — and to swiftly follow up reports that are late, missing, or incomplete.

Here are a few examples:

An incident report is lacking detail:

- ▶ It only takes a phone call or email to ask the worker to provide more information. They won't forget again.

Reports are being completed days (or even weeks) after an incident occurred:

- ▶ Follow this up with both the workers and their supervisor. System champions play a role here.

Witnesses are identified in an incident report, but have not completed a separate report:

- ▶ Everyone who was party to an incident should record their version of what happened. Follow up with line supervisors and WHS Representatives.

Consistent monitoring means holding people accountable, and ensuring that anyone who deliberately records false (or misleading) information faces disciplinary action and counselling. We're not saying you need to sack everyone who skips an incident report, but there are times when harnessing the disciplinary power of HR will reinforce your commitment to workplace safety and compliance.

Next steps

Are you ready for better incident management?

▶ **Review your reporting procedures:**

Do you have a clear process for the entire lifecycle of an incident or hazard? Compare your organisation's procedures with the 'Incident Lifecycle' we included in Section 2(A).

▶ **Identify key requirements:**

Have you got buy in from others? Consult with key stakeholders to ensure all personnel are able to contribute to the requirements list.

▶ **Investigate a cloud-based system:**

Are you using a paper-based reporting system that isn't really working? Book a free demonstration of Rapid Incident Reporting software today.

▶ **Refine your existing methodology:**

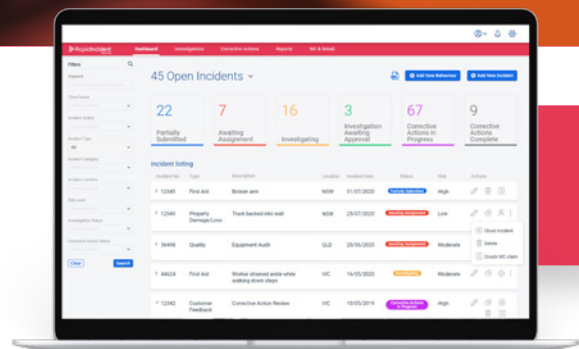
Are you already using Rapid Incident Reporting but not using it to its full capacity? Ask our amazing Client Services team for help configuring Rapid Incident Reporting to incorporate your unique operations and organisational structure.

Don't let your incidents get out of hand

Report incidents and meet compliance requirements easily with Rapid Incident Reporting

Get your time back

Ever wish you could see all your incidents in one place?



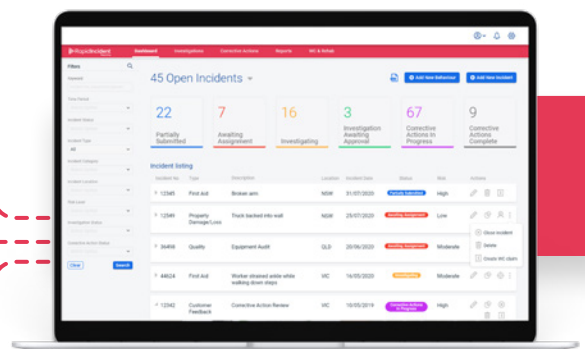
Never miss an incident

Rapid Incident Reporting makes reporting fast and easy with so many ways your contractors can report incidents.

Get full control

Built in automation means you never have to worry about missing an incident. Easily assign follow ups and corrective actions to your team.

Talk to us today!





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