



NSLS ES&H HIGHLIGHTS



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Preserve the scene of an accident or injury

Introduction

I recently responded to an assessment covering emergency response and preparedness at the NSLS, and came across the following question:

“Are your supervisors and managers aware of their responsibility to secure accident or incident scenes to preserve evidence for subsequent investigation?”

My initial response was, yes, they are prepared, especially based on their experience. After thinking about this for a while, I realized that here was an opportunity to remind supervisors and managers what they should do. Staff members and beamline personnel will also benefit from this guidance.

Guidance

Clues to how an accident or an injury occurred are available from the scene itself and from the people involved. It is therefore vital to secure the scene of the incident to both minimize any existing hazards and to assure that nothing is changed until cognizant staff members and safety personnel have had a chance to understand the nature, the severity and the path of the incident.

- If this is an emergency, call x2222, and then call the NSLS Control Room at x2550 so they can organize the response to the emergency.
- Secure the scene by limiting access, preventing any changes/repairs and keeping those involved in the area. Notify your supervisor and NSLS ESH staff.
- Disable any hazards, putting them in a safe configuration, so no further damage or injury can occur.
- Once these are done, persons may be interviewed to determine their involvement and the path of the incident; photographs of the scene may be taken, thus providing documentation for the future. It is often helpful to have those involved write down the sequence of events.
- Always interview those persons who were directly involved in the incident. Second or third hand information tends to differ from first hand information. Interview them as soon after the incident as possible. Delays may result in loss of information.
- When the scene and the personnel involved have been fully assessed, repairs and cleanup may commence.
- If the incident involves a Plant Engineering staff member or a contractor working for PE, contact that division’s safety personnel so they may also conduct their own review of the incident.

There may be a need to report the incident, depending on its severity, as well as a need to conduct a follow-up investigation. Proper preservation and management of the scene allows the collection of information vital to the investigation and no longer available once the scene has been repaired and cleaned. Useful Lessons Learned may result from the investigation.