

6—Accident Records and Injury Rates

In this chapter, the terms *accident*, *incident*, and *injury* are restricted to those that include occupational injuries and illnesses. In other chapters, accident and incident are used in their broad meanings—"unplanned events that interrupt the completion of an activity, and that may (or may not) include property damage or injury."

With the Wilhams-Steiger Occupational Safety & Health Act of 1970, a majority of employers are required by law to maintain certain records of work-related employee injuries and illnesses. In addition to these records, many employers are also required to make reports to state compensation authorities. Insuring agencies may also require reports. For contest and award programs, further reports based upon the American National Standards Institute Z16.1 Standard may be filed. Occupational injury and illness reports and records are now required of nearly every establishment by management or government.

Safety personnel are faced with two tasks—maintaining those records required by law and by their management, and maintaining records that are useful to an effective safety program. In general, unfortunately, the two are not always synonymous. A good recordkeeping system necessitates more data than that contained in almost all required forms.

This chapter deals with both aspects of recordkeeping. Specific legal requirements are beyond the scope of this volume because they differ from industry to industry and state to state and are subject to change with time. The appropriate federal and state authorities need to be contacted in order to obtain the most current requirements. An outline of the general recordkeeping requirements under the OSHA Act, as it exists at this time, is presented in the last section of this chapter. The basic definitions and the method of keeping records under the Z16.1 Standard are also presented.

Although this chapter covers injuries and illnesses occurring to employees while on the job, standards exist both for off-the-job injuries to employees (ANSI Z16.3) and for injuries occurring to non-employees in establishments (ANSI Z108). Both standards are briefly summarized in the off-the-job and patron injuries section. The standards themselves should be consulted by the safety

personnel concerned with those aspects of the overall safety program.

The first section deals with recordkeeping systems in general and contains sample forms and recommendations for establishing a good recordkeeping system.

Accident Records

Records of accidents and injuries are essential to efficient and successful safety programs, just as records of production, costs, sales, and profits and losses are essential to efficient and successful operation of a business. Records supply the information necessary to transform haphazard, costly, ineffective safety work into a planned safety program that controls both conditions and acts that contribute to accidents. Good recordkeeping is the foundation of a scientific approach to occupational safety.

Uses of records

A good recordkeeping system can help the safety professional in the following ways:

- 1 Provide the safety personnel with the means for an objective evaluation of the magnitude of his accident problems and with a measurement of the overall progress and effectiveness of his safety program.
- 2 Identify high-rate units, plants, or departments and problem areas so that extra effort can be made in those areas.
- 3 Provide data for an analysis of accidents and illnesses that can point to specific circumstances of occurrence which can then be attacked by specific countermeasures.
- 4 Create interest in safety among supervisors by furnishing them with information about the accident experience of their own departments.
- 5 Provide supervisors and safety committees with hard facts about their safety problems so that their efforts can be concentrated.
- 6 Measure the effectiveness of individual countermeasures and determine if specific programs are doing the job that they were designed to do.

Recordkeeping systems

The system presented in this section is a model that can be used to provide the basic