

# IDENTIFYING OCCURRENCE EVENTS

## THE CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS

By  
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When I visit new client companies, I often have the opportunity of touring the facility or work site with one of the company's management employees. They are usually interested in any physical hazards or safety violations, I may observe during my tour. I, however, am equally interested in observing the work behavior of the employees. In the vast majority of cases, it does not take me long to observe an employee or several employees doing something unsafe. When this occurs, I stop and wait to see if the individual I am with observes the same things that I do. I will usually wait about five minutes as I talk to my host. Amazingly, in many cases, the individual I am with does not recognize or see the unsafe behavior until I point it out.

I understand that as a Safety Consultant, I am focusing more on safety behavioral issues, yet it is these often unnoticed and uncorrected unsafe behaviors that lead to many employee accidents. In fact, the vast majority of accidents are not caused by serious unsafe situations. Most of us recognize these situations and take the appropriate steps to avoid the dangers. It is the everyday little things we do that causes most accidents. These are called Occurrence Events, an Occurrence Event is anything that happens for any reason that would allegedly lead to an accident.

Can you think of one or more Occurrence Events that may take place at your facility? They can be as simple as water on the floor, employees lifting improperly, employees not using their seat belts, employees working too quickly, improper use of tools or equipment, failure to follow through with safety tasks, lack of adequate safety training, unsafe conditions that are not corrected, lack of written operating procedures to provide guidelines or taking short cuts or unnecessary chances to get the job done. You can probably name many others.

The problem is that we do not see many of the above activities as dangerous and most of the time neither do supervisors. If we can successfully get away with any of these, we are likely to repeat the behavior in the future. If the behavior is easier or quicker we will repeat it more often. Eventually it becomes so common that we do it without thinking. It becomes so common that supervisors will walk right by without even noticing it as a concern. Therefore, this is the reason so many of the management employees I tour with do not see the things I see. It happens so often as to be common place.

Unfortunately no accident ever takes place unless one or more Occurrence Events take place first. Many times these have been repeated numerous times without accident. Once an occurrence event takes place however, the results are left to chance. Nothing may happen which is the case most of the time, but every once in a while something goes wrong and we have an employee injury. In almost every case a preventable employee injury.

The good news is Occurrence Events can be seen before an accident takes place. Simply by watching, observing and asking employees how they perform their duties, many Occurrence Events can be identified. Once identified, we can educate employees to the dangers and hazards. We can develop safe alternative procedures and alert our supervisors to be on the watch for the little things. Correct these as they happen and follow up to ensure they are not being repeated. All too often we do not, and the cycle begins again. Remember Accidents do not Happen by Accident, they are Caused. These causes are called **Occurrence Events**. We can identify these in advance and save the vast majority of accidents that take place as a result.

If you need any assistance with your Safety Programs or have any safety related questions, please call American Safety & Health Management Consultants, Inc., at 1-800-356-1274.