12 Best Practices for Good Catch or Near Miss Reporting

Close Pass

When a vehicle passes a bicyclist or pedestrian without maintaining a safe distance.

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Some examples of a Near Miss

Blocked Path

When the path of a bicyclist or pedestrian is blocked by a parked car or other objects, such as trash on the road, etc.

Driven At

When a narrow road or obstruction causes a driver to encroach on the path of a bicyclist or pedestrian heading in the opposite direction.

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1 ► Establish a reporting culture

Before you establish a Good Catch or Near Miss reporting programme, your organisation must have an established safety culture that encourages or rewards crash reporting. Your leadership should actively reinforce the message that every opportunity to identify and control risk, reduce hazard and prevent harmful incidents must be acted on.

Leading by example is a powerful way to shape a safety culture as it promotes a proactive approach to crash prevention. Leadership is instrumental in encouraging staff members to look at Good Catch or Near Miss situations as high-value, low-cost learning opportunities and an essential tool for effective risk management.

2 ► Avoid placing blame

Good Catch or Near Miss reporting is focused on identifying gaps in the organisation's safety management system to prevent crashes. It is not about blaming an individual for a crash. In fact, using a Good Catch or Near Miss reporting scheme to penalize staff will only damage an organisation's safety culture. To increase Good Catch or Near Miss reporting, employees must know that they can report incidents anonymously and without fear of retribution.

3 ► Be clear on what and how to report

Not all staff members or employers agree on what counts as a Good Catch or Near Miss situation. Defining what these terms mean in your organisation is essential to ensure that staff members know what to report. It's helpful to provide examples that could be encountered in your workplace.

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Some examples of a Good Catch

► Before leaving on a mission, you notice that not all vehicle passengers are wearing a seat belt. You remind them, they put on their seat belt and the mission can now begin.

► You are being driven to the field in a vehicle. You notice that it has been 2.5 hours since you and the driver set out. You kindly ask the driver to stop at the next safe rest stop, where he or she can pause for 15 minutes.

► While looking out the office window you notice that one of the vehicles, which is about to leave, has a malfunctioning taillight. You signal to the driver to stop the vehicle in order for it to be repaired before it is used.

It's recommended to discuss Good Catch and Near Miss situations in staff meetings or Toolbox Talks. Remember: A safety culture includes awareness at all levels and shouldn't be limited to drivers.

4►Make it easy to report

Don't over-complicate the Good Catch or Near Miss reporting process. Here are some helpful tips:

► Only ask for the information you need.

► Establish a process that allows a Good Catch or Near Miss to be reported in 60 seconds or less.

► Allow for reporting online, electronically or through mobile apps without passwords or login codes. Do include the option to report remotely for those situations when there is no Wi-Fi.

► Show staff members how to complete a Good Catch or Near Miss form, and explain the level of detail needed.

5►Encourage reporting through incentives

Anonymity is one method to encourage staff members to report a Good Catch or Near Miss situation. Another approach is to offer incentives. For example, use awards or plaques to recognise staff members who report hazards or donate to a charitable cause each time a Good Catch or Near Miss is reported. Incentives show that Good Catch or Near Miss reporting is valued in the organisation, and that enhances a reporting culture. It also engages employees in meaningful safety activities, and strengthens a continuous process of risk reduction.

Beware of some incentives and quotas

While incentives show that Good Catch or Near Miss reporting is valued in the organisation, some approaches can have a detrimental effect.

For example, recognising management performance based on OSHA recordable rates outcomes has been shown to suppress reporting, which can lead to punitive actions that further undermine safety efforts.

Quotas can also negatively affect the quality of information employers receive. For example, if staff members view Good Catch or Near Miss reporting as a mandatory quota, they may be inclined to report situations only to meet their quota. Once that requirement is met, they may ignore subsequent, and potentially more important, situations.

6►Involve staff in the solution

Organisations with a strong safety culture engage their staff not just to report unsafe situations, but also to identify solutions for preventing future Good Catch or Near Miss situations. This increases staff member engagement and can result in creative, fresh ideas. To kick-start staff involvement, consider using incentives such as awarding a gift voucher to the employee who presents the best initiative to prevent Good Catch or Near Miss situations.

7►Communicate your findings

A common pitfall for organisations is to work hard to obtain Good Catch or Near Miss reports, then failing to make any visible safety changes or to share feedback with staff members. When employees cannot see any benefits to reporting, this typically leads to unwillingness to report in future. Remember: The most important objective of Good Catch or Near Miss reporting is to identify hazards that need to be tackled and to implement corrective actions for achieving a safer workplace.