

**EAST COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE**  
**POLICIES, PROCEDURES & GUIDELINES**

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**SUBJECT: Accident Investigation**

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**PPG NUMBER: 20.7.2**

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**APPROVED BY:**

*Michael J. Jagers*  
**Board Chair**

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**1.0 REFERENCE**

WAC 296-305-01503

**2.0 POLICY**

- 2.1 After emergency actions have been completed following incidents that cause serious injuries (with immediate symptoms) or exposure to occupational disease-causing chemical or physical agents, a preliminary investigation of the cause of the incident shall be conducted. The investigation shall be conducted by a person designated, as qualified by the District. The findings of the investigation shall be documented for reference at any time following formal investigations.
- 2.2 Equipment involved in an accident resulting in an immediate or probable fatality, shall not be moved until a representative of the Division of Occupational Health and Safety at the Department of Labor and Industries investigates the accident and releases such equipment, *except* where removal is essential to prevent further accident. When necessary to remove the victim, such equipment may be moved only to the extent of making possible such removal.
- 2.3 Upon arrival of the Department of Labor and Industries' investigator, the Health and Safety Officer or designee shall assign as many personnel as are deemed necessary to assist the Department of Labor and Industries in conducting the investigation.
- 2.4 The District shall preserve all records, photographic materials, audio, video, recordings, or other documentation concerning an accident.

**3.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

- 3.1 The duties of the Health and Safety Officer include ensuring that all reportable accidents are investigated and reported.
- 3.2 The Health and Safety Officer will be responsible to define corrective action and shall ensure that accident reporting procedures are initiated, as necessary, per District policy.

**4.0 GUIDELINES**

- 4.1 The purpose of an investigation is to find the cause of an accident and prevent further occurrences, not to fix blame. An unbiased approach is necessary to obtain objective findings.

- 4.2** Interview the injured party and available witnesses, as soon as possible, to determine the following:
- 4.2.1** Circumstances preceding and surrounding the incident -- what were underlying and contributing causes, as well as immediate causes?
  - 4.2.2** What physical hazards existed at the time of the accident, such as unprotected openings; or housekeeping, slippery surfaces, protruding nails, etc.
  - 4.2.3** Were defective tools, equipment or materials provided to workers -- or were they improperly used?
  - 4.2.4** Was personal protective equipment provided; was PPE defective, not used, or used improperly?
  - 4.2.5** Did unsafe work practices contribute to the incident, including improper lifting or handling of materials?
  - 4.2.6** What Health and Safety rules or Health and Safety training might have prevented the accident?
  - 4.2.7** What unsafe conditions or unsafe actions were caused by a third party, i.e., another agency or a contractor?
  - 4.2.8** If possible, interview injured individuals at the scene of the accident and "walk through" a re-enactment. Be careful not to repeat the act that caused the injury.
- 4.3** Witnesses should be interviewed one at a time. Talk with anyone who has direct knowledge of the accident, and/or conditions, even if they did not actually witness the incident.
- 4.4** Record names, addresses and statements of witnesses. Consider taking signed and dated statements if facts are unclear or an element of controversy exists.
- 4.5** If a third party or defective product contributed to the accident, save any evidence. It could be critical to the recovery of claim costs.
- 4.6** In major incidents, use sketches, diagrams and photos to document details graphically. Take measurements when appropriate.
- 4.7** Define corrective actions that should be taken to prevent re-occurrence. Time tables must be established as to when the corrective action must be completed. Every investigation should include an action plan.