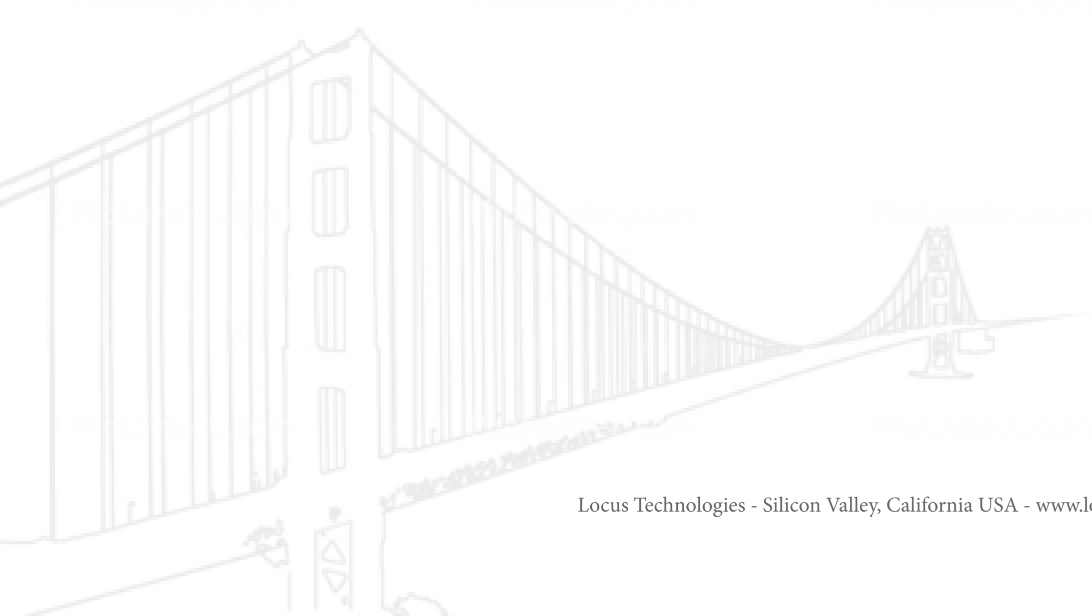
Taking Control of Your Incident Management

Both good and bad incident management directly affect an organizations well-being. This is why it's so important to get it right. The purpose of this white paper is to discuss how you can best identify, analyze, and minimize your incidents; turning a challenge into an advantage.



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The act of incident management is a necessary evil for many companies. It involves identifying, analyzing, and then correcting irregular and unwanted occurrences, such as accidents or injuries that happen during business operations. This practice becomes even more challenging when a company is subject to health & safety and compliance regulations, because specific tracking requirements and reporting structures are needed.

Using an incident management system can offer great advantages for any company when handling this process. But before jumping head first into a system, companies should first define what they need to record, track, and report on. After this, each company needs to make sure it picks the right system that will be able to cater to the requirements of its operations by meeting regulatory requirements and both its current and future business needs.

Necessary Data Capture

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Every company is different- meaning it’s important to decide what type of information it would be most beneficial for your organization in particular to capture. Depending on the size of your company, it may be necessary to gather a team of employees from across different sites, business departments or facilities in order to determine this. Having representation from across these different sectors can be crucial in uncovering what types of incidents occur at your organization as a whole.

Some important questions to ask employees about incident management:

- What information do you believe would be beneficial to see?
- What information is required to be recorded to meet regulatory requirements?
- Who do you report relevant information to?
- What data is needed to determine trends and complete necessary reports?
- What types of challenges do you run into on a regular basis?

After these questions are answered by your various representatives, you will have a better idea of what type of information needs to be captured.

Once the types of data are determined, the next point of focus is making sure a simple, standardized data entry process is in place. Many companies require that an incident management system be able to capture their specific company-defined incident classifications (i.e., accidents/injuries, illnesses, near misses, spills, etc.). When setting up a company-wide system, it is also essential that these specific data points are able to be entered and accessed at all divisions, sites, or facilities at every level of the organization.

Tracking your Incidents

It's one thing to determine the data you would like to be captured, and it's another to then track and act upon the metrics that your data eventually produce. This may sound fairly simple, but in reality this poses an enormous challenge to most organizations.

Sometimes this is due in part to some companies' business operations being spread all over the world. This can make it particularly hard for health and safety/incident managers to keep up with all incidents on a regular basis. Generally speaking, an incident is a classification. But, if you're not able to collect the necessary data on that incident, it then gets stuck in a folder somewhere at a particular site, and no one at corporate knows that it occurred.

So, how can a U.S.-based Corporate Head of Environment, Health & Safety be immediately informed of an incident that occurred thousands of miles away? One possible solution is a central incident management system that's accessible from anywhere. This provides the necessary employees with a bird's eye view of all incidents that are happening across all corners of an organization.

More importantly, you are then able to:

- Receive notifications that incidents have occurred.
- Conduct incident investigations with the assistance of tracked details and evidence.
- Apply root cause analysis (RCA) and corrective action (CA) methods to get to the bottom of the cause of the incident, and make sure it is not repeated.
- Automate the approval process of an incident report or investigation.
- Track and compare KPI metrics across the enterprise.

To accurately track incidents, many organizations take advantage of workflows. This simple feature can help you capture near misses and actual incidents, see when, where and why incidents are happening, and put the correct measures in place to minimize these unwanted occurrences. Every audit, incident, inspection and corrective action is automatically tracked- saving you time and resources.

Automating your reporting processes will free up employee work hours from being spent on manual manipulation, and thus free up value.

Reporting on your incidents

Capturing and tracking data is important, but isn't everything when it comes time to produce regulatory reports. For most companies, completing these required reports, such as the OSHA Form 300, is a very necessary final piece to the puzzle of their incident management.

Any system that will be managing your data should also have the capability to automate your reporting. If you are using a system that you still have to manually pull your data out of to produce reports, you will be paying employees to repeatedly report on the same things, meaning they will become bored and complacent because there is no inherent value behind the work. (What are they really getting paid to achieve?) In addition to this, valuable man hours will be wasted spent copying and pasting. This then becomes an issue with excessive cost and time.

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In addition to complying with the necessary regulatory bodies such as OSHA, being able to roll-up your information across facilities and sites can provide you with valuable comparisons and the ability to determine trends. This then makes it possible to easily see where the issues are, what is causing them, and how they can be avoided in the future.

Reporting and charting tools can also be used for emergency response documentation, exposure assessments, facility inspections, health and safety budgeting, and first aid cases across business divisions. Essentially, the reporting functionality provided with a good management system will enable you to benchmark incident data and view your incident performance metrics at a glance.

Conclusion

The overall goal of incident management is to restore regular operations as quickly as possible with the least possible negative impact on the organization. However, this task can be a formidable opponent when constantly having to capture, track, and report the information from all different kinds of situations- spills, injuries, illnesses, near misses, and more.

When faced with this challenge, companies should consider enlisting the help of a centralized incident management system. The right system will provide a secure, configurable, and auditable environment for managing investigations, and collecting and analyzing key safety metrics aimed at reducing accidents and mitigating risks- all while remaining compliant with regulatory obligations.

You can't drive change if you don't see the opportunities. A system providing the necessary analytics and insight into your organization can help bring these opportunities to light.

About Locus

Locus Technologies is a leading provider of web-based EHS management software. Since 1999 Locus' software has been helping companies track, analyze, and report their data in order to surpass organizational efficiency targets, improve operations and data quality, save time, and lower costs.

For more information, please visit www.locustec.com.