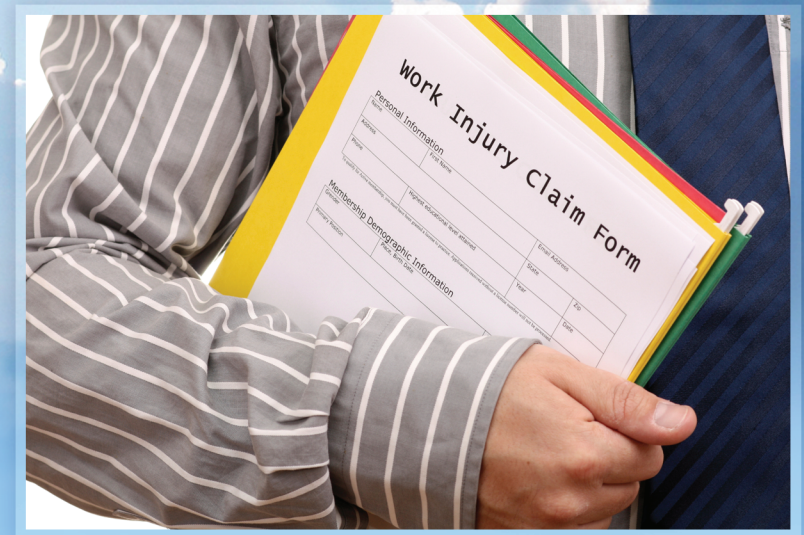


Incident Reporting

This eBook from West Bend will cover everything you need to know about incident reporting. You'll learn when an incident report should be completed, how they should be filled out, and why they are so important to your organization's financial and legal future.



What is an Incident Report?

An incident report is a document used to collect information on unexpected or traumatic situations that occur at your facility or during activities sponsored by your organization.

Incident reports are meant to be completed by a staff member when:

- Someone is injured,
- When property is damaged,
- When disciplinary action is required, or
- When some other legal issue arises.

These situations will be covered in more detail throughout the rest of this eBook.



WHY ARE INCIDENT REPORTS SO IMPORTANT?

Incident reports are important to a lot of different people for a lot of different reasons.

Courtroom Scrutiny

The moment someone signs an incident report it becomes a document that can be used in a court of law. When an incident leads to significant injury or property damage, there is a possibility that the case will go to trial as the impacted parties seek damages. The incident report will be one of the first documents scrutinized, so you need to be confident it outlines the incident exactly as it occurred.

Unexpected Future Litigation

Incident reports can also be used to help protect your organization from frivolous litigation in the future. Unfortunately, we live in a time when false claims are made on a regular basis. In many cases, people wait months and sometimes years to file suit. This delay can make recalling the exact facts of the incident difficult...which is exactly when an incident report is so helpful!

Trend Analysis

Incident reports aren't only used to protect against legal action. If filled out properly, incident reports can also be one of your organization's most valuable tools for recognizing opportunities for improvement. Incident reports should be reviewed on a regular basis by management to identify developing trends. For example, if you see a spike in incident reports for slips and falls each January, it might be time to review your snow and ice removal plans. If you don't document incidents it can be extremely difficult to make sense of long-term historical patterns and make improvements going forward.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Because incident reports are so important, you should never provide your signature on the page until you are 100% confident with every detail. You should be prepared to discuss your description of the incident in a court of law.

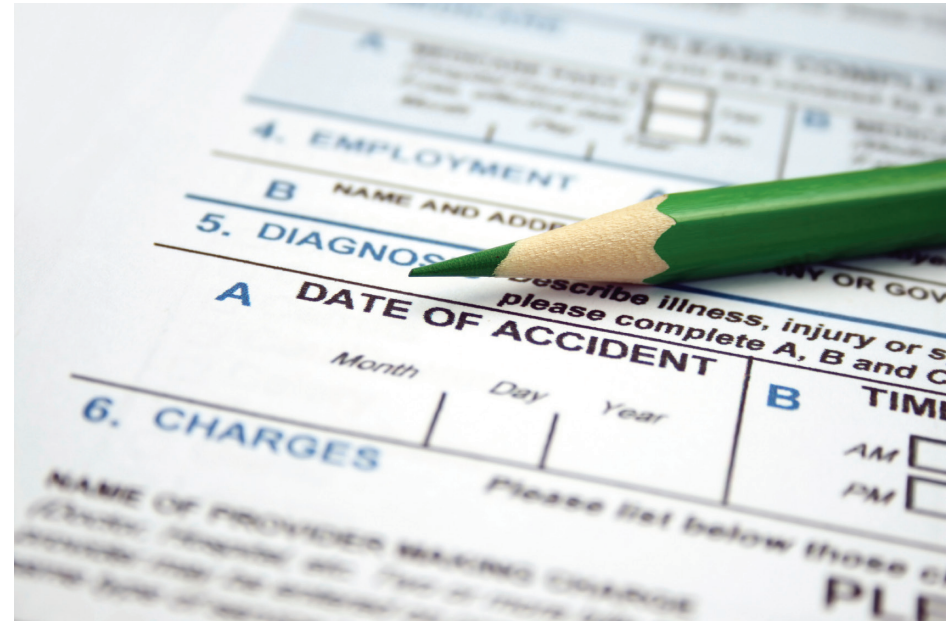
Only two people should sign an incident report: the person that actually filled the report out and, if applicable, that person's supervisor.



WHAT DOES AN INCIDENT REPORT LOOK LIKE?

Not all incident reports look alike, but, for the most part, they'll share a lot in common with one another. The incident report included at the end of this eBook is simply an example that includes all of the most important sections.

An incident report will have room to enter contact information for the people involved in the incident, the date and time when the incident occurred, lots of room to enter the details surrounding the incident, and, finally, a place to sign your name.



THE KEYS TO A GOOD INCIDENT REPORT

Let's discuss the proper way to complete an incident report.

Before we start going through the specific sections of a sample incident report, we need to make a few important points. No matter what your organization's incident report looks like, these four easy rules apply.

1. **Always stick to the facts;** never ever speculate. Always stick to the facts that you know to be true. If you didn't see something happen, do not say that you did.
2. **Be thorough;** assume every detail could be important. Even incidents that seem minor at the time can turn into big ordeals. If it's factual and at all related to the incident then write it down.
3. **Write clearly and succinctly.** This point can't be emphasized enough. If people can't read an incident report it's worthless. Take your time and write legibly. Use simple sentences and stick to the facts!
4. **Unless you're a doctor, don't diagnose injuries.** If you're not a doctor or a trained medical professional, do not attempt to diagnose a person's injuries. Write what you can see.

DISCUSSING MEDICAL DETAILS

Not all incidents require medical attention, but those that do can be some of the most stressful and sensitive.

As is the case with describing the incident, you should only write what you know to be true. There's a natural temptation to try and diagnose an injury. Unless you're a doctor...don't act like one. When describing an injury and any subsequent medical treatment, always remember your limited expertise. Write what you can see.

If someone walks up to you limping and they say that they think they broke their ankle, do not write "They broke their ankle." Instead, write something like "They were limping, the ankle was clearly swollen, and they said that they felt like it was broken."

After you have the injury detailed, provide clear information about any medical treatment that was provided to the victim. If someone provided the victim with a Band-Aid or an ice pack be sure to write that down. No detail is too small.



WITNESS STATEMENTS

Another important element of many incident reports is witness testimony. The best way to ensure that every incident is documented as thoroughly as possible is to obtain feedback from witnesses.

Not all “witnesses” are equal, however. Someone that had heard about what happened from a guy who knows a guy doesn’t count as a witness. Someone that is “pretty sure they know what happened” doesn’t make a particularly good witness either. In general, you want people that actually witnessed the incident occur. With that said, in many liability cases it can be helpful to have testimony from someone who can speak to the conditions of the premises at the time the incident occurred. This kind of witness might not necessarily know all of the specifics of the incident. And, yes, a child can be a witness if no adults were present.

As soon as you’ve identified your witnesses, gather their basic contact information, write down their understanding of the events surrounding the incident, and be sure to indicate their level of involvement with the incident. Do not wait to get this crucial information; a person’s recollection of specific details fades incredibly quickly.

INCIDENTS INVOLVING MINORS

Depending on your organization and the industry you work in, you may be exposed to a large number of incidents involving minors.

Incident reports are important no matter who is involved, but when a parent entrusts you with their child they have an expectation that they'll make it home in one piece. Most parents will understand if their child gets a scraped knee while under your care, but if you don't know anything about how or when it happened you might run into some problems. This is precisely where an incident report can be so valuable.

Anytime you have an incident involving a minor, someone at your organization should attempt to make contact with the minor's parents or guardians. This contact needs to be documented clearly in the incident report. Be specific about who was contacted, how they were contacted, who at your organization made contact, and the time the contact was made.



WHEN TO FILL OUT AN INCIDENT REPORT

Every organization will choose to handle incident reports differently. Some organizations tend to be extremely risk adverse while others may choose to only fill out incident reports in the most extreme circumstances. West Bend recommends filling out an incident report if you believe there is even the slightest possibility that someone will raise questions in the future.

Here are some situations we strongly recommend filling out an incident report:

- Fill out a report any time first aid of any kind is administered to a minor. No matter how small the injury may seem to you, fill out a report just in case a parent or guardian has a concern.
- Fill out a report any time significant amounts of bodily fluids – like blood or vomit – are discharged by an adult, minor or employee. An adult with a slight nose bleed may not require a report, but anything much beyond that should be accompanied by an incident report.
- Always fill out an incident report any time an employee is injured on the job.
- Fill out a report if someone needs to be restrained or physically removed from the company's premises, or if a person makes a threat of violence.
- Fill out an incident report if you believe that a crime has been committed on premises. This includes all crimes big and small...including petty theft, claims of harassment, or worse.
- Fill out an incident report any time significant property damage is sustained. This includes company-owned property and property that belongs to visitors and/or volunteers.

In general, when it comes to deciding whether or not to fill out an incident report, our advice at West Bend has always been...**when in doubt, fill it out.** Other than the time it takes to fill one out, there's no downside to completing an incident report.

PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

If you do a good job filling out an incident report there will likely be a lot of confidential and potentially sensitive information. That is, after all, the entire point. This can be a problem, however, when someone makes a request to see a copy of an incident report tied to a situation they or their child may have been involved in.

Because these documents can be used in legal settings, it's best to have an insurance or legal professional handle these requests. You're encouraged to reach out to a lawyer or your insurance carrier when these requests are made.



DOCUMENT RETENTION

Because an incident report can be used in legal proceedings, it is important that they are properly stored and retained.

Each state will have different document retention mandates, and, in many cases, it may be in your best interest to keep copies for even longer than the law requires due to statute of limitations rules. Once again, you are encouraged to discuss these state-specific questions with your insurance carrier or a legal representative.



Incident Report

Injured Party

Full Name: _____ Guardian Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____
Address: _____ Phone: _____

Incident Details

Location: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____
Detailed Description: _____

Injury Details

How were you made aware of the apparent injury? INJURED PERSON EXPLAINED THEIR INJURY I VISUALLY ASSESSED
Description of Apparent Injury: _____

Medical Treatment

Who Provided Medical Treatment: _____
First-Aid Provided: _____

Anyone Contacted? Name: _____ Relationship to Injured Person: _____
Who Made Contact: _____ How was Contact Made: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Witnesses

	WITNESS #1	WITNESS #2	WITNESS #3
Name & Age:	_____	_____	_____
Phone:	_____	_____	_____
Address:	_____	_____	_____

Follow Ups

Date: _____ Name: _____ Comment: _____
Date: _____ Name: _____ Comment: _____
Date: _____ Name: _____ Comment: _____

Signatures

Staff Name: _____ Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____
Supervisor Name: _____ Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

From everyone at West Bend, thank you for your part in making the world a safer and healthier place. We hope that you have found the information in this free eBook to be helpful in your risk management efforts.

This eBook only represents a fraction of the safety resources available to you. We encourage you to visit TheSilverLining.com to view West Bend's entire catalog of free safety articles, videos, and links.

We also hope you'll connect with us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube.

