

Learning

The purpose of an investigation is to understand how things usually go right as a basis for explaining how things occasionally go wrong. – Erik Hollnagel

What it is

Improving the health and safety of a workplace through learning from both what is working well, as well as from near hits and incident.

Why do it

To continually increase people’s safety and wellness, every opportunity to learn and make improvements needs to be identified and taken. Learning opportunities exist not only in things that have gone wrong (e.g., near hits and incident), but in the everyday work (i.e., things that go right most of the time). There is a significant amount of learning to be had from understanding why things worked well despite less than ideal conditions, as there is from things that go – or have the potential to go – wrong.

How to do it

- ▶ Look for opportunities to learn in everyday work – don’t wait for something bad to happen to learn and improve
- ▶ Focus on how things usually go right as a basis for explaining how things occasionally go wrong
- ▶ Ask: ‘What did we do today that helped us to go home safe and well?’
- ▶ Provide opportunities for workers to make suggestions for process improvements
- ▶ Use mistakes, near hits, and incident as opportunities for learning rather than finger pointing
- ▶ Involve workers in investigations so that their insights are included
- ▶ Ask: ‘What happened? Why did it make sense for people to do what they did? How did we respond? How can we avoid similar situations in future?’
- ▶ Discuss how to hold each other to account
- ▶ Report the findings of all investigations to workers.

Track it

Use the following checklist to track whether your learning practices are on track or need action.

In our crew/team, we...	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
Learn from what we do well			
Learn from our mistakes			
Take part in investigations			
Share ways to improve our health and safety			
	Urgent action required	Action required	On the right track

Remember...

Look for opportunities to learn from everyday work – don’t wait for something bad to happen to learn and improve.