



Checklist

Checklist for Investigating Accidents Causing Personal Injury

This checklist is designed for use by employees who investigate any type of accident that occurs on campus or school grounds resulting in personal injury. United Educators has found that good investigation practices can significantly reduce the chance of litigation or strengthen the institution's defense when litigation does occur. Not all the steps outlined in the checklist will apply to every situation; and the checklist should be adapted as appropriate for use at your institution.

As a rule, the first step after any accident should be immediately obtaining medical assistance for injured parties and calling appropriate authorities, such as police or fire responders. Institutions should conduct their investigations and document the conditions at the time of an accident before making any repairs or changes. In addition, investigators should aim to determine the facts surrounding the accident rather than the accident's cause or who is to blame. In doing so, it is important to avoid speculation, be as objective as possible, and focus on gathering evidence instead of drawing conclusions.

1 Investigating the Accident Scene and Circumstances

A. All Accidents

Completed?

Immediate Actions at the Scene

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Secure the scene and prevent unauthorized access during the investigation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Determine the precise location of the accident. | |
| 3. Take measurements at the accident scene. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Diagram or sketch the scene. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Actions Needed

Actions Needed

5. Take photographs or video. Yes No
- Include a measuring tape or other device in photographs to provide perspective Yes No
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- Include images of the victim and witnesses indicating the accident location Yes No
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- Preserve photographs and video of the incident and scene, including security camera footage Yes No
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6. Take samples, or document presence, of any unusual substances or fluids, such as water on the floor. Yes No
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7. Collect or document the presence of any foreign objects. Yes No
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8. If the accident occurred outdoors, document weather conditions. Yes No
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9. Document footing and lighting conditions. Yes No
-
10. Document any unusual sound or noise conditions. Yes No
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11. Determine the number of people who were present, especially if crowded conditions may have contributed to the accident. Yes No
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12. If the accident occurred outdoors, document the type of ground surface, such as grass, artificial turf, or gravel. Yes No
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13. If the accident occurred indoors, document the type of floor surface, such as wood, tile, or concrete. Yes No
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14. Document any surface covering on the ground or floor, such as carpet, mats, or tarps. Yes No
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15. Document whether the surface was level or sloped. Yes No
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16. Document any apparent defects in the ground or floor, such as broken or uneven concrete, warped wood, or torn or loose vinyl. Yes No
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17. If the accident involved stairs, determine whether a handrail and anti-slip strips were present and in good repair and note the condition of the risers. Yes No

Follow-Up Investigation

18. For accidents occurring indoors, document when the floor was last swept/cleaned/waxed/mopped, and whether any "wet floor" signs were posted if required. Yes No
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19. If defects exist, determine how long they were present and whether there was prior notice to the institution. Yes No
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20. Examine any prior history of accidents at the location. Yes No
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21. Examine any prior complaints made about the location. Yes No

22. Determine whether any recent repair work has been done at the location. Yes No

23. Determine whether regular or periodic inspections of the area were required and, if so, were conducted. Yes No

B. Specific Types of Accidents

Completed?

1. If the accident involved athletics:

▫ Determine whether participants were using protective equipment, such as helmets and pads Yes No

▫ Determine whether equipment was in good operating condition Yes No

▫ Examine whether participants followed any recommended practices, such as using spotters or having coaches or trainers present Yes No

▫ Investigate whether coaches or others in authority took actions to increase or decrease the risk of injury (e.g., obtain team practice schedules and videos of practices) Yes No

2. If equipment or tools were involved in the accident, determine:

▫ Their operational condition Yes No

▫ Whether they were used properly and with needed authorization Yes No

▫ Whether users received appropriate training Yes No

3. If the accident resulted in a fire or explosion, determine:

▫ Whether chemicals or other hazardous substances were being used Yes No

▫ Whether any chemicals or hazardous substances were used properly, with authorization, and after required training Yes No

▫ Whether sprinklers were present and operational Yes No

4. In the case of a fall from a building, determine the:

▫ Condition of windows, screens, and any crash bars Yes No

▫ Condition of balconies, porches, decks, or fire escapes, including stairs and guardrails Yes No

▫ Condition of the roof Yes No

▫ Ease of access to the windows or roof Yes No

▫ Presence and condition of barriers limiting access, such as locked doors Yes No

▫ Presence of warning signs if access is limited Yes No

Actions Needed

Actions Needed

5. If the accident involved one or more vehicles:

▫ For the accident location, determine:

- Road conditions when the accident occurred Yes No
- Weather conditions when the accident occurred Yes No
- Other factors bearing on visibility Yes No
- The proximity and role of traffic signals/lights, signs, intersections, crosswalks, or traffic patterns, such as circles or roundabouts Yes No

▫ For each vehicle involved, determine:

- Its speed at the time of the accident Yes No
- The vehicle's operating condition, including tires, brakes, lights, turn signals, wipers, and muffler Yes No
- The operating condition of protective devices, including seat belts and air bags Yes No
- Information relating to the vehicle's load, such as weight limitations and authorized cargo type or capacity Yes No
- The date of its last service and any maintenance problems Yes No
- Whether the vehicle is owned/leased by the institution or the individual driver Yes No

▫ For each driver involved, obtain information about:

- His or her driver's license and insurance Yes No
- How long the driver has been licensed Yes No
- Compliance with traffic safety laws and rules at time of the accident Yes No
- The vehicle's registration Yes No
- Any passenger identification Yes No
- The driver's prior accident history Yes No
- The driver's mental and emotional state before the accident Yes No
- Whether the driver was fatigued or distracted, such as by use of a cell phone or other electronic device Yes No

6. If the driver is an employee or volunteer of the institution, determine whether he/she:

- Was working at the time of the accident Yes No
- Completed any required driver training or safety course Yes No

2 Dealing With Accident Parties and Witnesses

A. Identify all injured parties and witnesses

Completed?

1. Interview injured parties separately from each other and from witnesses. Yes No

2. Document all injuries, both those observed and those described by the parties or witnesses, as specifically as possible. Yes No

3. Determine the injured party's physical position immediately before and after the accident. Yes No

4. Determine whether the injured party had any disability or medical condition. Yes No

5. Establish whether the injured party wore, or needed, glasses/contact lenses or hearing aids. Yes No

6. Establish whether the injured party used, or needed, a cane, walker, or other device to assist mobility. Yes No

7. Document the type and condition of the injured party's clothing and shoes. Yes No

8. Determine what items the injured party was carrying. Yes No

9. If the accident involved an employee on the job, check for compliance with relevant work procedures and rules. Yes No

10. Determine whether the injured party has made past complaints or claims of injury against the institution. Yes No

B. Interviews

Completed?

All Interviews

1. For each injured party and witness, determine the individual's:
 - Identification (name, address, phone, email, age) Yes No

 - Status (student, employee, volunteer, alumni, visitor) Yes No

 - Reason for being at the accident location Yes No

 - Familiarity with the location Yes No

2. Ask open-ended questions when possible, avoiding those that allow only "yes" or "no" responses. Yes No

Actions Needed

Actions Needed

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3. Obtain the individual's account of the accident and follow up with specific questions to cover:
- How the accident happened Yes No

 - Whether anyone besides the injured party was involved in the accident Yes No

 - The person's prior knowledge of any defects, including warning signs, tape, or barriers Yes No

 - Use by anyone involved in the accident of electronic devices, such as speaking/texting on a cell phone or using an MP3 player Yes No
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4. Make short notes during the interview and detailed notes immediately following it. Yes No
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5. Request a sketch or diagram of the accident location and events. Yes No
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6. Consider recording (video, audio, or both) the individual's statement. Yes No
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7. Request the individual's written statement or completion of the institution's form. Yes No

Injured Party Interviews

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8. Document any refusal of medical treatment by the injured party. Yes No
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9. Offer the injured party assistance in contacting family or friends. Yes No
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10. Determine:
- Whether the injured party was alone or accompanied when the accident occurred Yes No

 - What the person was doing immediately before the accident Yes No

 - What the person did immediately after the accident Yes No

 - The person's awareness of any witnesses to the accident Yes No
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11. Ask whether the injured party consumed any alcohol, drugs, or medication (prescription or otherwise) within 24 hours before the accident. Yes No
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12. Include factual observations about the injured party's condition, including any corroborating evidence, such as "the injured party appeared intoxicated based on a strong smell of alcohol, slurred speech, and difficulty walking." Yes No

Witness Interviews

13. Determine whether the witness has a relationship to the injured party or was simply a bystander. Yes No
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14. If the witness was a bystander, establish what attracted his or her attention, such as screaming or sound of impact. Yes No
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15. Establish the witness' exact location, relative to the injured party, at the time of the accident. Yes No
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16. Determine whether the witness overheard any statements by the injured party or others involved in the accident. Yes No
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17. Ask whether the witness has any knowledge of alcohol or drug use by the injured party before the accident. Yes No

Acknowledgment

This checklist was written by Hillary Pettegrew, senior risk management counsel for UE.

Actions Needed



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