



Driver Incident Root-Cause Analysis

If you or your organization has had multiple crashes of the same type, you might have a recurring problem and are not learning from past mistakes.

Generally speaking, organizations are set up to achieve the results that they are currently getting. To improve crash rates, something different needs to be done. According to the National Safety Council's *Accident and Prevention Manual — Administration and Programs 12th Edition*, in a study of a large organization, root cause identification was appropriate 43 percent of the time and corrective actions were appropriate 53 percent of the time. Similar conditions may exist in your organization.

Drivers

As a driver you may realize that you have had a close call or two. These close calls can be attributed to various reasons. You, the driver, will have the greatest understanding of the conditions at the time of the close call. It is up to you to then take corrective actions, improving your driving performance to reduce your risk of future crashes. This might mean reducing distractions, increasing following time, decreasing speed, or improving a driving skill such as backing, parking, or maneuvering in close quarters. Additionally, a driver should always ask why he or she was in a situation where a close call occurred. This may help to get to the root cause of the close call or accident.

Organizations

Many organizations speed through the process of crash investigation/root cause determination and do not dedicate enough time to identifying true root causes. When organizations fail to identify the true root causes of problems, the corrective

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actions created generally do not lead to continuous improvement. In the case of vehicle crashes, many organizations will merely recommend re-training for a driver who has had a crash. Organizations should look toward their motor vehicle safety program during root cause analysis to see if the safety program was followed. Moreover, the examination should determine if the program needs to be improved or modified.

Using specific review and classification procedures, organizations need to objectively analyze the circumstances of a vehicle crash, and determine whether the driver did everything reasonably possible to avoid the crash. In this process, organizations need to look at:

- Management role
- Operational environment (including in-vehicle technology)
- Driver selection and qualification
- Vehicle maintenance and driving conditions
- Incident reporting
- Route planning
- Scheduling
- Compensation systems

It can be difficult to self-critique. This is partly why root-cause analysis does not get proper attention. It is worth repeating: generally speaking, organizations are set up to achieve the results that they are currently getting.

Root-Cause Analysis Tools

There are various root-cause analysis tools that can be used during crash investigations. These tools, when used properly, can help people understand problems and their root-causes. Some of the more popular methods include:

- **The 5 Whys**, retrieved from <http://www.isixsigma.com>
- **Failure Mode and Effects Analysis**, retrieved from <http://asq.org>
- **Fault Tree Analysis**, retrieved from <http://www.weibull.com>
- **Fishbone Diagrams**, retrieved from <http://asq.org>
- **Taproot**, <http://www.taproot.com>

If people do not thoroughly examine problems, and do not address root causes, only minor short term improvements may be achieved, if at all. However, long-term sustainable continuous improvement can be achieved if root causes are identified and addressed.

Liberty Mutual SafetyNet™ Resources

Evaluating individual driver motor vehicle records (MVRs), RC 5516

Model safety plan: Motor fleet safety, RC 5291

MVDP™ driver telematics root cause analysis, RC 5392

Vehicle crash classification, RC 803

Vehicle safety program self-evaluation, RC 5525

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