



# The Complete Guide to Laboratory Incident Reporting

Includes a Step-by-Step Checklist

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# The Complete Guide to Laboratory Incident Reporting

In any laboratory setting, maintaining a safe and compliant work environment is paramount.

Laboratories are dynamic environments where various hazards are present, and incidents can often lead to serious and potentially disastrous consequences.

Accurate and timely reporting of all accidents, incidents, near misses, and hazards is crucial for ensuring the safety of personnel and the integrity of research.

This guide will cover the common challenges in reporting, key regulations, types of reportable incidents, and detailed checklists for managing different types of lab incidents.

# Importance of Reporting Lab Incidents

Effective incident reporting in laboratories not only helps in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements but also plays a vital role in identifying potential risks and preventing future incidents.

Here's why it's important to report all lab incidents:



## Preventive Action

Reporting allows for the identification and mitigation of risks before they result in more serious incidents.



## Training and Awareness

Helps identify areas where additional training or resources may be needed to prevent future incidents.



## Continuous Improvement

Enables ongoing evaluation and improvement of safety protocols and procedures.



## Safety Culture

Encourages a proactive approach to safety and promotes a culture where employees feel responsible for reporting and addressing hazards.

# Common Challenges in Lab Incident Reporting

Despite the importance of thorough and timely incident reporting in laboratories, several challenges can hinder the process. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing effective strategies to overcome them and ensure a safe working environment.

Here are some common challenges in lab incident reporting:

## 1 Underreporting



### Fear of Repercussions:

Employees may fear disciplinary action or blame, leading them to avoid reporting incidents.



### Perceived Insignificance:

Some incidents, especially near misses or minor injuries, may be seen as too trivial to report.

## 2 Lack of Awareness



### Unfamiliarity with Reporting Procedures:

Employees may not be fully aware of the correct procedures for reporting incidents.



### New Employees:

Recently hired staff may not have received comprehensive training on incident reporting procedures.

## 3 Inadequate Training



### Insufficient Training Programs:

Lack of regular training on incident reporting and safety protocols can lead to confusion and non-compliance.



### Inadequate Knowledge of Reportable Incidents:

Staff might not know which types of incidents should be reported.

## 5 Complexity of the Process

### Cumbersome Reporting Systems:



Complex or time-consuming reporting systems can discourage employees from reporting incidents.



### Paper-Based Reporting:

Reliance on manual, paper-based systems can result in delays and inaccuracies.

## 6 Lack of Feedback

### No Follow-Up:



When employees see no follow-up or corrective action taken after reporting an incident, they may feel that their efforts are futile.



### Unclear Communication:

Poor communication about the outcomes of reported incidents can lead to disengagement from the reporting process.

## 7 Technological Issues

### Outdated Systems:



Old or inefficient technology can hinder the reporting process.



### Lack of Integration:

Reporting systems that are not integrated with other safety and compliance systems can complicate data management and analysis.



# Guidelines and Regulations for Reporting Lab Incidents

In the UK, reporting laboratory incidents is governed by a comprehensive set of guidelines and regulations designed to ensure safety and compliance.

Understanding and adhering to these regulations is crucial for maintaining a safe laboratory environment and avoiding legal repercussions.



## Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

This legislation places a duty on employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. It mandates the creation of safe working environments and the implementation of adequate safety measures.



## Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013

RIDDOR requires employers, self-employed individuals, and those in control of premises to report specific work-related incidents. This includes work-related deaths, major injuries, work-related diseases, and dangerous occurrences (near misses).



## Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002

COSHH provides guidelines for the control of hazardous substances to prevent harm to health. Laboratories must conduct risk assessments, implement control measures, and maintain records of incidents involving hazardous substances.



## Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

These regulations complement the Health and Safety at Work Act by outlining more specific duties for risk assessment, health and safety arrangements, and incident reporting procedures.



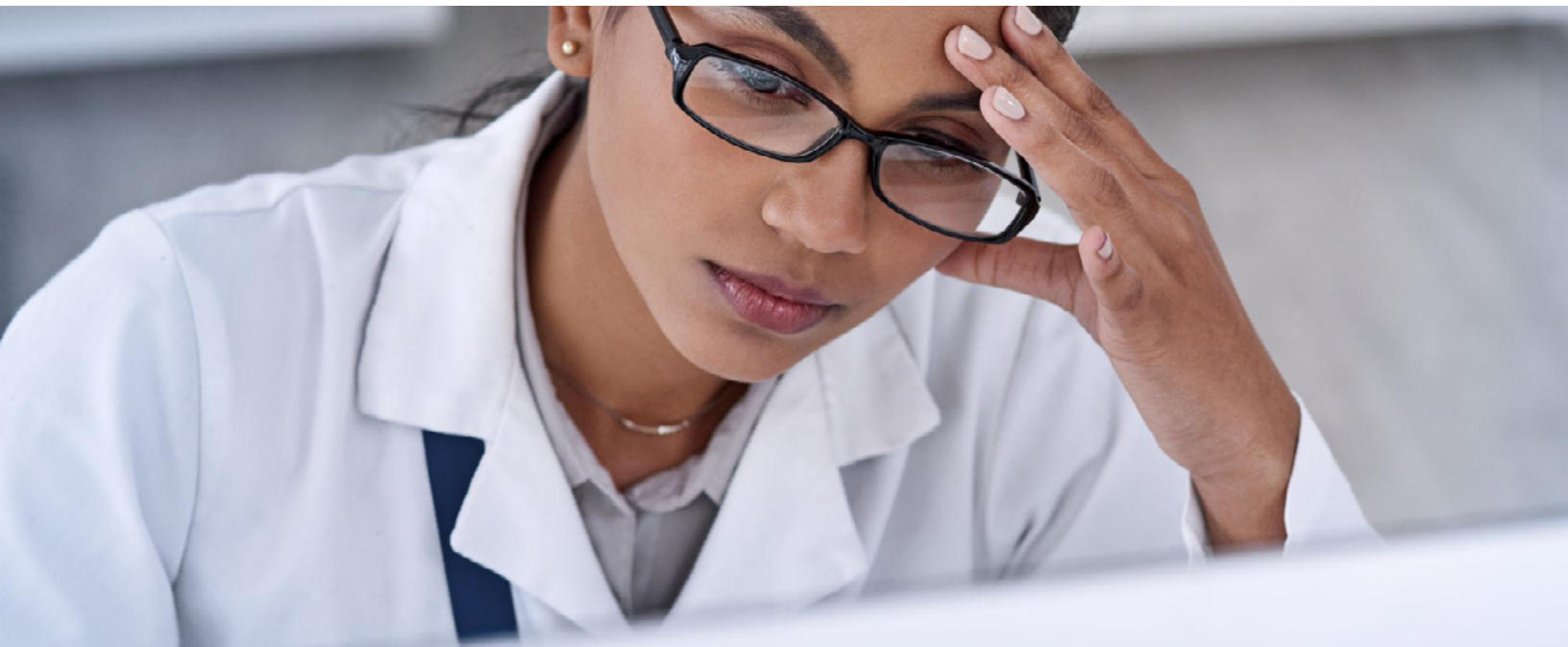
## Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016

Laboratories that handle hazardous materials must comply with these regulations, which govern the release of substances into the environment. Any incidents involving environmental contamination must be reported to the appropriate authorities.



## The Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 2014

These regulations apply to labs working with genetically modified organisms (GMOs). They require risk assessments, containment measures, and reporting of any incidents involving GMOs.



# Types of Incidents to Report in Lab Settings

While not all incidents may be reportable to an external body, it is good practice to document and address them all to enhance overall safety.

Below are the types of events that should be reported in lab settings:

## 1 Injury

- ✓ Any physical harm, including minor cuts, burns, bruises, and lacerations.
- ✓ Injuries caused by sharp objects, chemical burns, or contact with hot surfaces.

## 2 Property Damage

- ✓ Damage to laboratory equipment, furniture, or infrastructure.
- ✓ Breakages or malfunctions that could pose a safety risk.

## 3 Release of Hazardous Materials

- ✓ Any spill or unintended release of chemicals, biological agents, or radioactive materials.
- ✓ Incidents involving the escape of gases or vapours.

## 4 Biological Spills

- ✓ Spills involving biological materials, including blood, cultures, or other potentially infectious substances.

## 5 Sample Mix-ups

- ✓ Errors in labelling or handling samples that could lead to contamination or incorrect results.
- ✓ Incidents where samples are lost or damaged.

## 6 Equipment Failures

- ✓ Malfunctions or failures of lab equipment, such as centrifuges, autoclaves, or fume hoods.
- ✓ Electrical faults or mechanical breakdowns that interrupt lab operations.



## 7 Unexpected Chemical Reactions

- ✓ Reactions that were not anticipated, causing potential safety hazards.
- ✓ Incidents involving uncontrolled or exothermic reactions.

## 8 Fires

- ✓ Any fire, regardless of size, within the lab.
- ✓ Incidents involving smoke or burning materials.

## 9 Hazards

- ✓ Identification of potential hazards, such as slippery floors, exposed wires, or blocked emergency exits.
- ✓ Any unsafe conditions that could lead to an incident if not addressed.

## 10 Near Misses

- ✓ Incidents where no injury or damage occurred, but where the potential for harm was present.
- ✓ Close calls that could have resulted in an accident under slightly different circumstances.

# RIDDOR-Reportable Incidents

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013 mandates that certain work-related incidents in the UK must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Below are the types of incidents in a lab that must be reported under RIDDOR:



1 Work-related deaths



6 Exposure to carcinogens, mutagens and biological agents



2 Non-fatal injuries to workers



7 Incidents involving members of the public



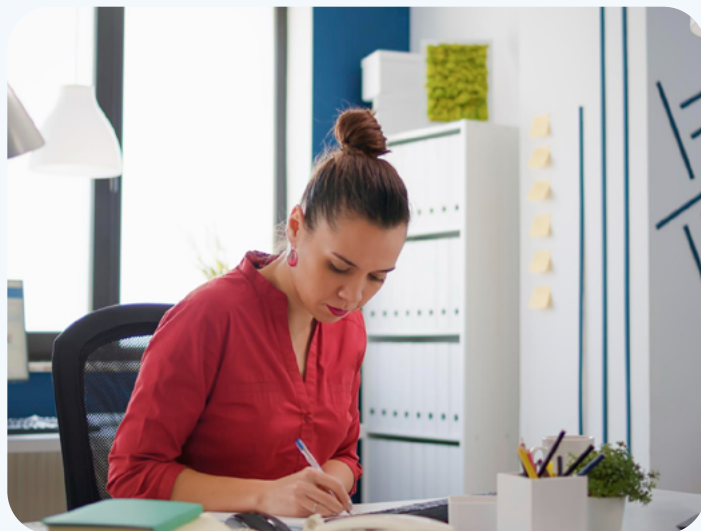
3 Over-seven-day injuries



4 Work-related diseases



5 Dangerous occurrences (near misses)



For more information on the specifics of RIDDOR-reportable incidents, read our detailed article

[READ ARTICLE](#)

# RIDDOR Reporting Procedure



## Immediate Reporting

Certain incidents, such as fatalities and major injuries, must be reported immediately.



## Online Reporting

Most other reportable incidents can be reported online through the HSE website.

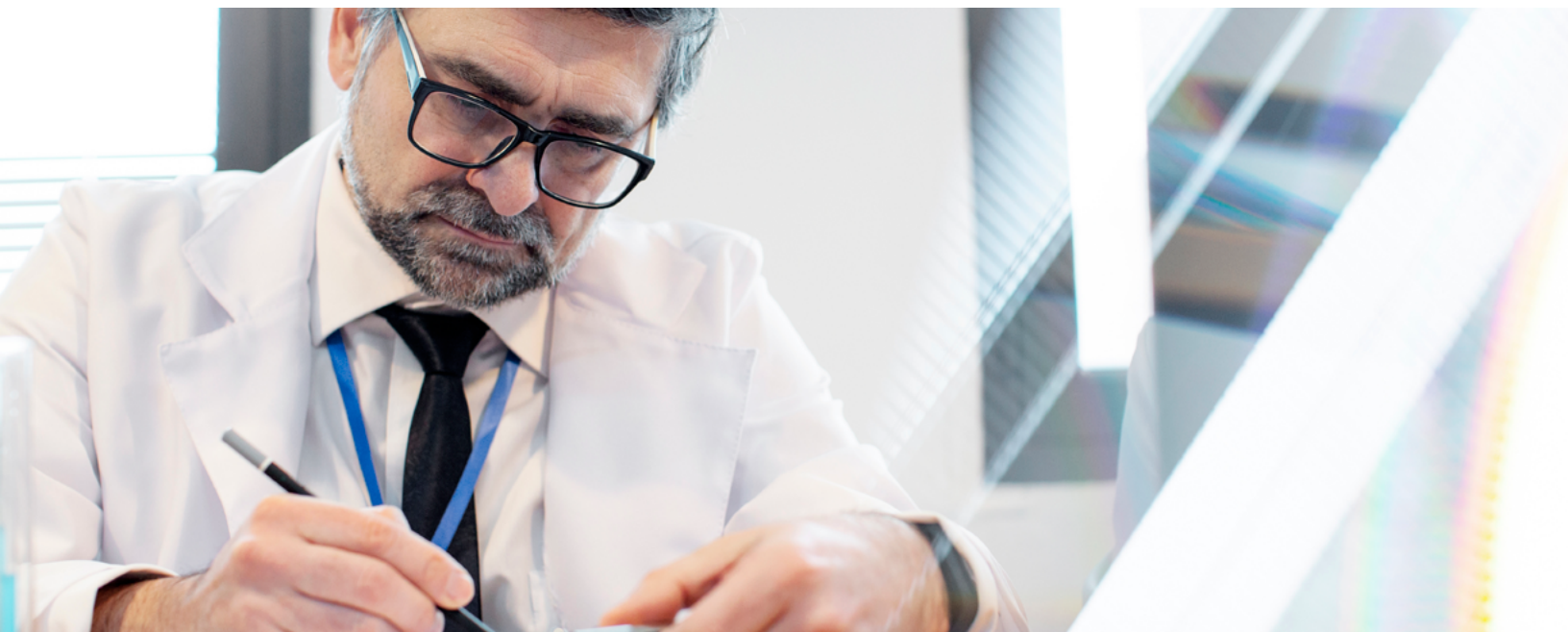


## Keeping Records

Employers must keep records of all reportable incidents for at least three years.

Read our comprehensive guide to learn more about your RIDDOR responsibilities

[READ ARTICLE](#)



# Checklist for Reporting Lab Incidents

This next section provides a detailed checklist for managing laboratory incidents, tailored to the severity of each incident.

You can also download the full checklist as a document here

[DOWNLOAD CHECKLIST](#)



## 1 Incident Identification

### ✓ Observation:

Note what happened, how it occurred, and who was involved.

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### ✓ Documentation:

Record the date, time, and location. Use forms or digital tools to capture details accurately.

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### ✓ Classification:

Identify the type of incident (e.g., injury, property damage, hazardous material release).

## 2 Immediate Action

### ✓ Safety Measures:

Ensure everyone's immediate safety.  
Administer first aid if needed.

---

### ✓ Containment:

Prevent further harm or damage by isolating the area or containing spills.

## 3 Severity Assessment

Assessing the severity of the incident is crucial to determine the appropriate level of response and ensure that resources are allocated effectively.

### 🩹 Minor Incidents:

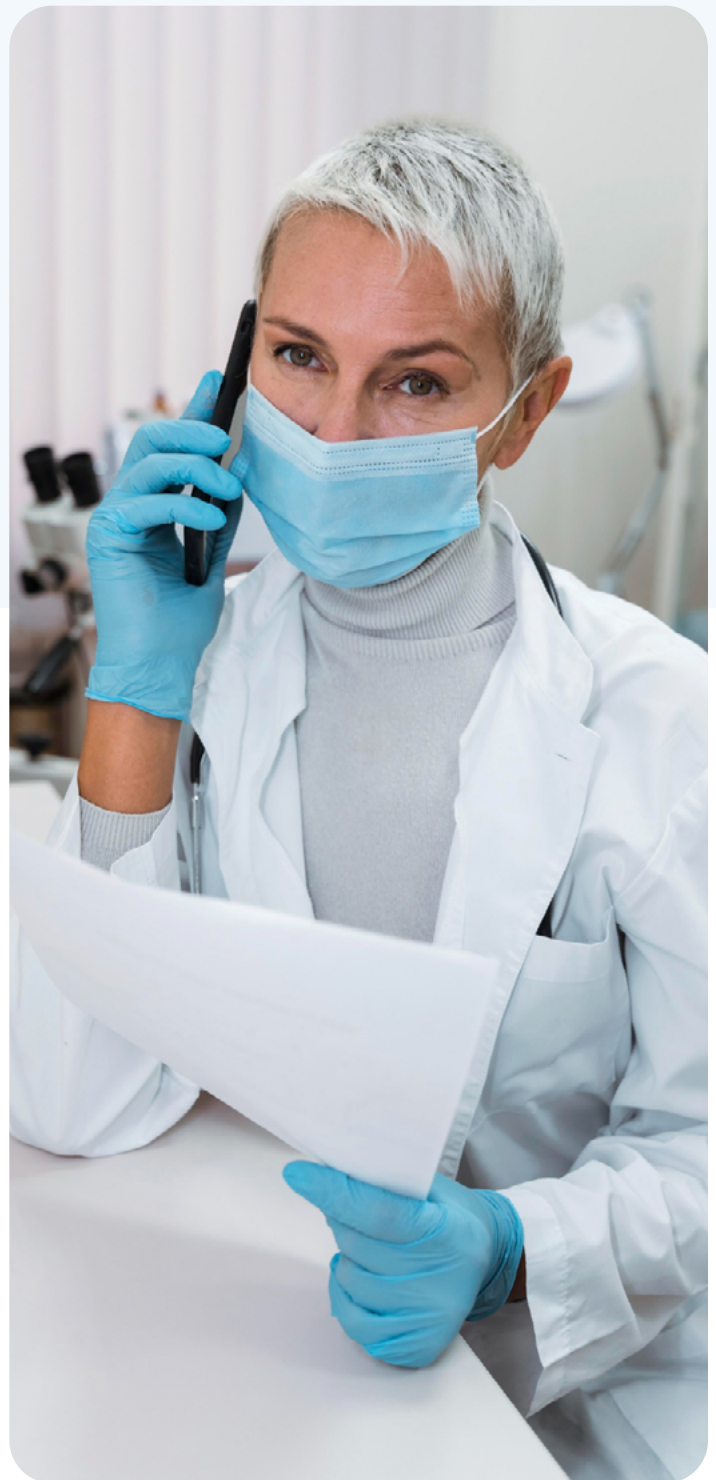
✓ Minimal harm or disruption.

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✓ Easily contained and resolved.

#### EXAMPLES:

Minor cuts, small spills, minor equipment malfunctions.





### **Moderate Incidents:**

✓ Noticeable harm or disruption.

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✓ Requires medical attention or significant containment efforts.

#### **EXAMPLES:**

Significant injuries, moderate spills, equipment failure affecting operations.

### **Major Incidents:**

✓ Severe consequences.

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✓ Significant harm or environmental impact.

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✓ Extensive resources required for containment and resolution.

#### **EXAMPLES:**

Severe injuries, large spills, fires, major equipment failures.

After completing the initial steps and assessing the severity of the incident, follow the specific checklist for the severity level to ensure proper handling and resolution.



## ✔ SEVERITY LEVEL 1:

### Minor Incidents

#### EXAMPLES:

Minor cuts, small spills, minor equipment malfunctions.

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#### Incident Report

- ✔ Complete a brief incident report with basic details.
- ✔ Notify immediate supervisors and team members, keeping records for internal review.

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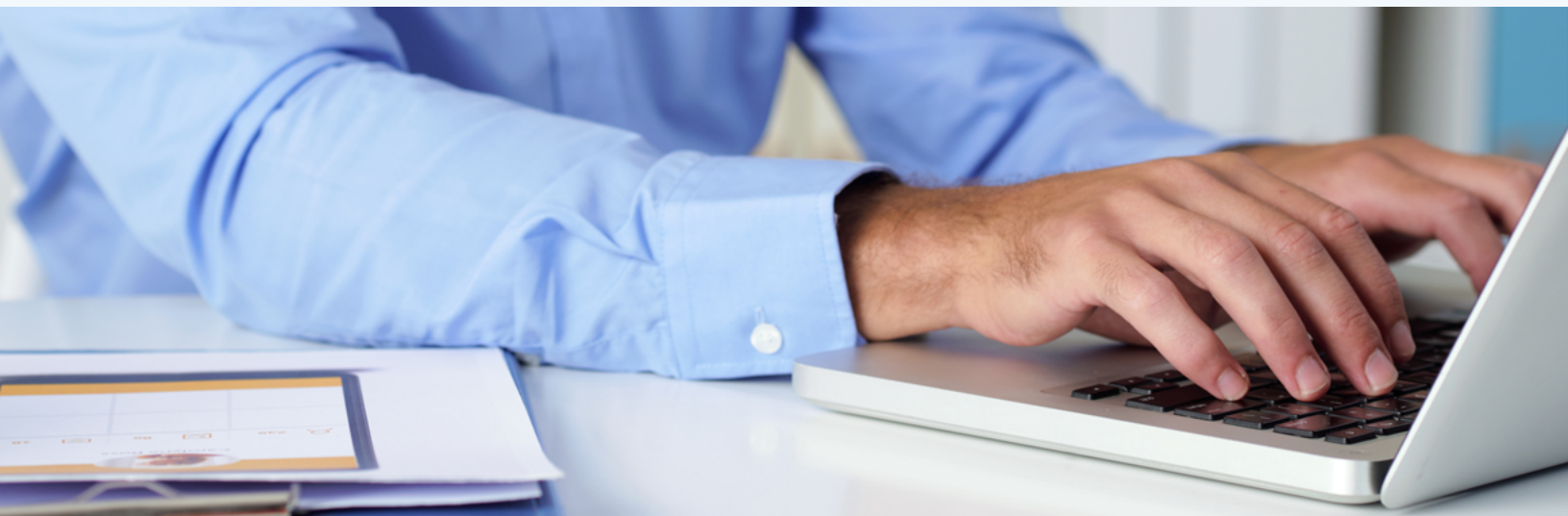
#### Corrective Actions

- ✔ Implement simple fixes (e.g., cleaning a spill, minor equipment repairs).
- ✔ Provide on-the-spot retraining if necessary (e.g., proper use of equipment).

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#### Monitoring

- ✔ Ensure the incident does not recur.
- ✔ Review similar incidents for patterns to prevent future occurrences.





## ✔ SEVERITY LEVEL 2:

### Moderate Incidents

#### EXAMPLES:

Significant injuries requiring medical attention, moderate spills, equipment failure affecting operations.

# 4

#### Incident Report

- ✔ Fill out a detailed incident report, including comprehensive details and any relevant photographs or diagrams.

# 5

#### Investigation and Root Cause Analysis

- ✔ Conduct a formal investigation to identify root causes.
- ✔ Use tools like the 5 Whys or Fishbone Diagram to analyse the incident.

# 6

#### External Reporting

- ✔ Evaluate whether it is a RIDDOR-reportable incident.
- ✔ Report it to external authorities if required.

# 7

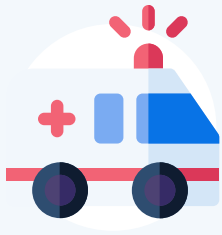
#### Corrective Actions

- ✔ Develop and implement significant changes such as engineering controls or procedural updates.
- ✔ Assign responsibilities and deadlines for implementing corrective actions.

## Monitoring and Follow-up

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- ✓ Regularly check the effectiveness of corrective actions.
- ✓ Schedule follow-up inspections or audits.
- ✓ Track incident trends over time to evaluate the impact of changes.



### ✓ SEVERITY LEVEL 3:

## Major Incidents

### EXAMPLES:

Severe injuries, large spills, fires, major equipment failures.

4

## Incident Report

- ✓ Document comprehensive details of the incident.
- ✓ Include photographs, diagrams, and video evidence if available.

5

## Investigation and Root Cause Analysis

- ✓ Perform an in-depth investigation, possibly involving external experts.
- ✓ Use advanced analytical tools to determine root causes.

6

## External Reporting

- ✓ Prepare a detailed formal report for external regulatory bodies.
- ✓ Ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.

## Corrective Actions

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- ✓ Implement extensive corrective measures such as major procedural changes or structural alterations.
- ✓ Document and track all actions to completion.

## Monitoring and Follow-up

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- ✓ Establish a long-term monitoring plan to ensure the effectiveness of corrective actions.
- ✓ Schedule periodic audits and reviews.
- ✓ Implement continuous improvement processes based on monitoring results.

## Post-Incident Review

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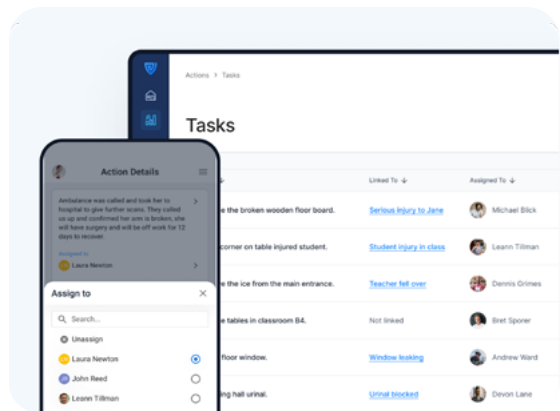
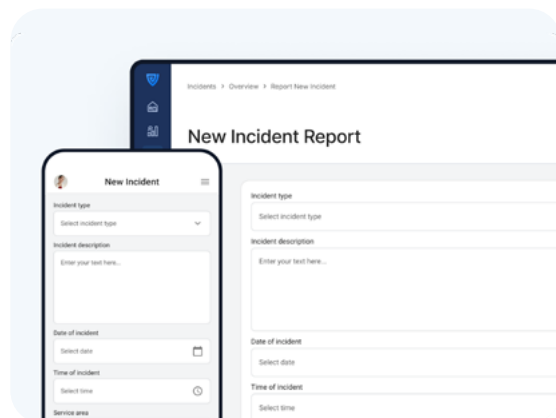
- ✓ Conduct a review meeting to discuss lessons learned from the incident.
- ✓ Update policies and procedures based on findings.
- ✓ Ensure all staff are trained on new protocols and procedures.



# Report and manage lab incidents with our incident reporting platform

## Simplify Incident Reporting Across Your Organisation

- ✔ Design incident reporting forms to gather all pertinent details.
- ✔ Ensure accessibility of reporting on all devices for complete coverage.
- ✔ Include detailed descriptions and photographic evidence for a full incident overview.

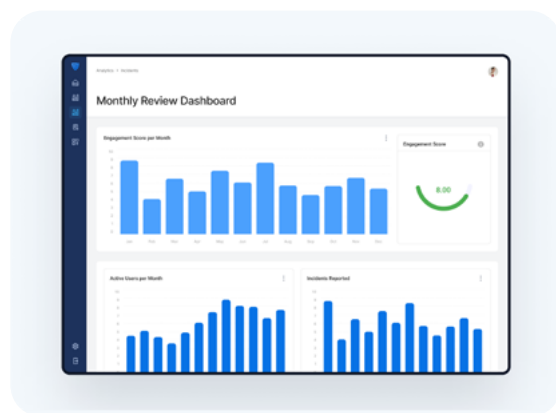


## Streamline Investigations & Corrective Actions

- ✔ Receive instant notifications for new reports to ensure immediate action.
- ✔ Directly assign corrective actions to employees through the platform, with a focus on thorough RIDDOR compliance tracking.
- ✔ Use custom fields to deepen analysis and understanding of each incident.

## Strategic Safety Insights Through Analytics

- ✔ Analyse data to spot trends, including lost time due to injuries, chemical exposure incidents, and equipment failures, enhancing preventive measures.
- ✔ Leverage automated reporting to streamline safety management and save significant time.
- ✔ Include detailed descriptions and photographic evidence for a full incident overview.



**GET QUOTE**

# Summary

Having reviewed the critical elements of lab incident reporting, including guidelines, types of incidents, and common challenges, it's clear that efficient reporting is crucial.

Proper incident reporting ensures compliance with regulations like RIDDOR, helps identify and mitigate risks, fosters a proactive safety culture, and facilitates continuous improvement.

By following this incident reporting checklist, you have a reliable procedure to guide you through the process and ensure no important information is overlooked, creating a more efficient laboratory environment.

Additionally, digitalising the incident reporting process can simplify compliance, improve response times, and enhance overall safety.

Discover how our incident reporting tool can make it easier to streamline laboratory incident reporting

[LEARN MORE](#)

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