

HSE descriptors:

'near miss': an event not causing harm, but has the potential to cause injury or ill health (which can include dangerous occurrences); eg. failed Covid-19 social distancing controls.

'dangerous occurrences': one of a number of specific, reportable adverse events, as defined in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

'undesired circumstance': a set of conditions or circumstances that have the potential to cause injury or ill health. Eg, staff undertaking activities without essential safety training.

(HSG245, 2004)

Near miss scenario: A risk assessment control measure has not been implemented within the workplace or a safe system of work (SSOW) has not been followed which could have exposed an employee or others to Covid-19.

Examples of failed risk assessment controls (not exhaustive): failure to social distance, failure of cleaning controls, mixing of workplace 'bubbles', overcrowding in indoor spaces above agreed maximum capacity, inadequate ventilation.

H&S rep near miss checklist:

- report a 'near miss' using your employer's accident reporting system
- report a 'near miss' using the appropriate HMPPS accident reporting system
- report the 'near miss' to UCU using their online reporting tool here:
www.ucu.org.uk/covid19reporting
- discuss near miss reporting data with the employer and consult on actions needed to prevent re-occurrence. Review safety measures and risk assessments
- determine if UCU H&S rep(s) need to undertake an investigation or inspection of the relevant area. Report any findings to the employer and seek further consultation and review of safety measures and risk assessments where applicable
- escalate any urgent matters directly with the employer following the agreed branch escalation process
- raise any unresolved safety matters with UCU national lead for prisons (prisons@ucu.org.uk) to enable further escalation with employer and HMPPS
- safety reps contact HSE concerns and advice team where safety concerns remain and internal processes exhausted: www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/hsrepresentatives.htm

It is important to report near miss events to ensure employers are aware of any failures in their workplace safety measures and to maintain a safe working environment for all. Employers must investigate workplace near misses to identify what went wrong and why. They must ensure that effective risk assessment control measures are in place which address the immediate, underlying and root causes of near miss events.