

# Real Life Incident Illustrates the Importance of Addressing Near Misses



Near misses create opportunities to address a safety issue before anyone gets hurt or killed. But workers don't always report near misses. And when they do, supervisors and safety professionals don't always assess the near miss, figure out what happened and then take the necessary steps to correct the problem.

To get everyone in your workplace to take near misses seriously and respond appropriately and quickly when they occur, use [this incident investigated by NIOSH](#) to show exactly how valuable near misses are.

At Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey, an airplane tail stand was damaged when the central stabilizer was left in the down position as it was being moved, causing it to catch on the edge of a manhole cover that extended 5/8" above the paved surface. No one was hurt; no corrective action was taken.

About an hour later, a cargo handler was using a cargo tug vehicle to return another tail stand to its storage location. The support pad of its central stabilizer, which was down, caught the lip of the same manhole cover. The tail stand flipped forward and struck him in the head, neck and back before pinning him to the steering wheel of the tug. It caused

massive traumatic injuries to the cargo handler, who was pronounced dead at the hospital.

NJ investigators with NIOSH's Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program issued several recommendations based on their investigation, including that workers should discuss'and management should actively seek'information related to potential problems or near misses encountered by workers while performing work tasks.

The investigation report explains that near misses are important predictors of fatalities and serious injuries. Thus, standard safety practice dictates that *all* near misses should be evaluated and corrective action should be taken to avoid injury and death. In this case, the fatal incident could've potentially been avoided if the tail stand snag that occurred an hour before the fatality had been assessed and corrective action taken.