

SURVIVAL PAPER

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Near Miss Incidents and Survival

There is a safety theory that there are about 300 near-miss incidents for every 30 minor injuries and 1 serious injury or fatality. That means that there may be several hundred *opportunities* to recognize and prevent a hazard *before* it cause harm. On the survival level there are two kinds of near miss incidents.

Personal near miss's are those in which you are directly involved but by chance alone did not result in harm to your life, liberty or property. Examples of these are:

- Almost getting lost in the woods while hunting.
- Almost hitting another car because you forgot to check you blind spot.
- Almost starting a kitchen fire because the flame was too high
- Almost being caught in a storm because you didn't check the weather
- Almost being a crime victim because of poor awareness
- Almost hurt on the job because of not wearing protective equipment

These are things that almost happened to you or those near you because of things you did or failed to do. Learning from the near misses of others is free. Learning from our own near miss incidents may have some costs. Not learning from them is dangerous. Don't make excuses. Give yourself choices and chances.

General near misses are natural or man made events that *almost* caused a disaster but had minimal impact and little or no impact on you. Examples of these could be.

- An epidemic that was prevented or quickly controlled
- A hurricane that missed your area.
- A serious crime in your neighborhood that didn't happen to you.
- A terrorist attack on the train you take to work that was prevented
- Job layoffs that did not get to you

Almost anything that you read about or see on television that happens to other people could happen to you and be considered a general near miss.

If near misses are not recognized as warning and opportunities for preventive or preparatory action they will keep happening until one of them doesn't miss.

Take personal near misses personally. Ninety percent of injuries and deaths are caused by the unsafe actions of the victim or those near the victim. Be willing to accept responsibility for your own safety and survival. In most cases being in the wrong place at the wrong time doing the wrong thing is the result of choices you make. Be ready to choose to change your habits, behaviors and improve your safety and survival skills in order to eliminate those personal near miss incidents before they get you. Even if other were involved in near miss incidents, you have to take the position that it's your responsibility to prevent or avoid the repeated occurrences. Accepting that responsibility is the first step to personal safety and survival. You should not just say "wow that was close" you should be asking yourself:

- What could or should I have done to avoid or prevent that incident?
- What can or will I do to avoid or prevent that kind of incident in the future?
- How can I improve my own habits, behaviors, awareness levels, etc.?
- What can I learn from this incident to reduce this and other risks?
- What can I do to avoid and defend against the deliberate or accidental dangerous actions of others?

In the case of general near miss's you probably have little control of or responsibility for the causes. That which has happened will happen again. That which has happened to others can happen to you. Where you live, how you live and what you do will determine what kinds of general near misses require your

concern. An earthquake in California is a near miss for people in Kentucky's New Madrid earthquake zone. A hurricane in Texas is a near miss for the North Carolina. Terror attacks in New York are near misses for those living in Chicago or Washington D. C. but not for someone on a farm in Iowa. Gang crime, terrorist activities, economic instability and epidemics anywhere are near misses for almost everyone today.

While you probably cannot prevent such events. You may be able to avoid some hazards by changes in your location, habits, routes, etc. but this may only lead to new hazards. Your major responsibility here is awareness and preparedness. Consider the worst-case effects of the hazards evident in the near miss. Plan to reduce the negative effects (injury, losses) of the event through the acquisition of knowledge and equipment. Life preservation comes first so consider how to avoid injuries, treat injuries, defend yourself, assure safe air, drinkable water, and adequate shelter (falling debris, flying bullets, cold, wet, chemicals, etc.) from the hazard. I didn't forget food but it comes after all of the above.

Personal near miss incidents *do* happen to you and general near misses *can* happen to you. Near miss incidents are warnings and opportunities to act. Failure to acknowledge your responsibility to act is choosing to be at risk for a direct hit instead of a near miss.