



SAME OUTCOME. DIFFERENT POTENTIAL.

It's the
Little Things...
Until It's
Everything.

People.
Perspectives.
Safer
Tomorrows.

WHAT
HAPPENED?
No Injury

WHAT COULD
HAVE HAPPENED?

- Fatality
- Life-altering Injury
- Amputation
- Crushing
- Electrocution
- Chemical Exposure
- Fire / Explosion
- Environmental Release

DON'T LET THE OUTCOME HIDE THE RISK.

A near-miss, first aid, or minor incident may look small on the surface, but the potential consequence could be significant.

Don't just look at what happened.
Look at what could have happened.



RECOGNIZE
the potential.



STRENGTHEN
the controls.



PREVENT
the next one.

Same event. Different risk.
That's why the little things matter.

THE ORIGINAL TRIANGLE

Herbert Heinrich (1931)
1 : 29 : 300



THE MODERN VIEW

Not all "little things" are created equal. Focus on events with Serious Injury and Fatality (SIF) potential.



Look beyond
the numbers.



Focus on
potential.



Use every event
as a learning
opportunity.

SCENARIO CHALLENGE

Same Outcome.
Different Potential.

Review each pair. Both events had the same actual outcome — no injury. Which has the greater potential? Why? What could change the outcome?

1 THE TRIP



Employee catches a shoe on an extension cord in a conference room and regains balance.



Employee catches a boot on an air hose while working near an unprotected elevated edge and regains balance.

2 THE DROPPED OBJECT



A wrench falls six inches from a workbench onto the floor.



A wrench falls from an elevated work platform into an occupied work area below.

3 THE ENERGY



Employee discovers a machine wasn't completely isolated before beginning a task, but no hazardous energy was released.



Employee discovers a machine wasn't completely isolated and stored energy capable of causing fatal injury remained present.

THE LITTLE THING TEST

Ask these questions for any event or near-miss.

- What happened?
What was the actual outcome?
- What could have happened?
Ignore luck for a moment.
- What controls stood between this event and a serious outcome?
Were they engineered—or did a person just get lucky?
- Could one small change have made the outcome significantly worse?
- Does this event have SIF potential?
Could it reasonably have resulted in a life-altering injury or fatality?

What seems small today
could be a life-changing event tomorrow.

EVENT POTENTIAL ASSESSMENT

Use this tool for incident reviews, near-misses, or observations.

Event / Observation:

Actual Outcome:
☐ No injury ☐ First aid ☐ Property damage ☐ Injury/illness

Potential Outcome if One Condition Changed:
☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ Serious ☐ Life-altering / Fatal

What kept the outcome from being worse?
☐ Engineered safeguard ☐ Administrative control ☐ PPE
☐ Another employee intervened ☐ Timing / position
☐ Luck / chance ☐ Other:

Could this happen again?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Does this require escalation?
☐ Correct locally ☐ Supervisor review ☐ EHS review
☐ SIF-potential review ☐ Immediate stop-work / control

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Look beyond the outcome. Evaluate the potential.
- Focus on high-potential events, not just the count.
- Strengthen systems and controls that keep small things from escalating.
- Use every event as a learning opportunity.
- A resilient workplace can absorb small shocks before they become disasters.

Same outcome doesn't mean same risk.
See the potential. Take action.



IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS...
UNTIL IT'S EVERYTHING.

PRESENTER NOTES (10-15 MINUTE TOOLBOX TALK)

1. INTRODUCTION (1-2 MIN)

- Thank the team for their time.
- Share the purpose: to recognize that the same outcome (no injury) can have very different potential consequences.
- Explain that this tool helps us look beyond what happened and consider what could have happened.
- This supports our goal of preventing serious injuries and fatalities (SIF).

2. THE BIG PICTURE (2-3 MIN)

- Use the iceberg graphic.
- Explain: "Just like an iceberg, we only see the outcome on the surface. The real risk is what could be hidden below."
- Briefly introduce Heinrich's Triangle (1 : 29 : 300). It shows that there are many more lower-consequence events than major injuries.
- Emphasize the modern view: Not all little things are equal. Focus on events with SIF potential instead of just counting numbers.

3. SCENARIO CHALLENGE (5-7 MIN)

- Review each pair (Trip, Dropped Object, Energy).
- Ask the group: "Which has the greater potential? Why? What could change the outcome?"
- Encourage discussion.
- Key point: Same outcome (no injury), but different risks based on location, energy, and surrounding conditions.

4. THE LITTLE THING TEST (2-3 MIN)

- Walk through each question.
- Explain how these questions help identify high-potential events.
- Use real examples from your site to make it relatable.

5. WRAP UP (1-2 MIN)

- Reinforce key takeaways.
- Remind the team to report hazards and near-misses.
- Every report is a learning opportunity.
- Close with: "See it. Own it. Make it safer for all of us."

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Keep the discussion conversational.
- Use real examples from your site.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Encourage different perspectives.
- Emphasize learning, not blame.
- Tie to your company's hazard reporting process and SIF prevention efforts.

"A safer tomorrow
starts with what you see today."