Why record near misses

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“Near misses” or “close calls” with high potential for serious harm should be investigated as thoroughly as incidents that result in serious injury. Near miss incidents have been shown to have similar causes to serious incidents, yet are grossly under-reported and are often “shrouded by a veil of silence”. They differ from serious incidents in that no injury or damage results. But the types and degree of loss are often a matter of chance, depending partly on luck and partly on the actions taken to minimise the loss. Consequently, the effect could range from insignificant to catastrophic, from a scratch or dent to multiple fatalities or loss of plant (equipment or buildings).

Some important indices of close calls:

* People involved express relief, often through exaggeration and humour,
* They often do not identify it as a true incident so do not report it formally,
* Therefore no analysis is made,
* No analysis means no interventions to stop or alter the close-call circumstances are made, which means the close call is likely to occur again.

Taken from Haddock, C. (2005) *Outdoor safety: Risk management for outdoor leaders (2nd ed.).* Wellington: New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (pp. 74-75)