

Did you know?



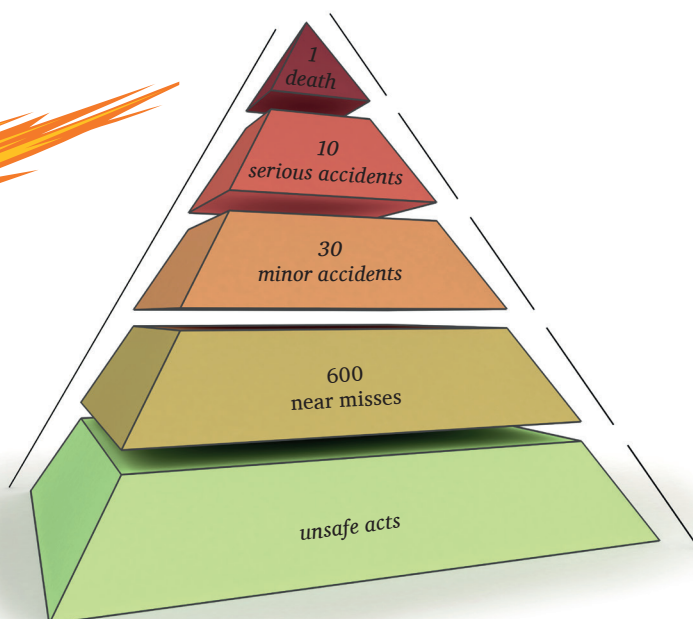
NEAR MISSES

23 March is World Near Miss Day. It marks the day when a 300 metre asteroid came very close to the earth.

On March 23 1989 an asteroid flew past the earth at a distance of about 450,000 miles (680,000 km). That sounds like a big distance, but on the cosmic scale, it was really near. If it had hit us, it would have had a catastrophic effect on our planet. It would have released more energy than 1000 Hiroshima atom bombs. We were lucky. In short, it was a near miss.



Health and safety experts use a principle called ‘the accident triangle’ to show the connection between near misses, minor accidents and more serious accidents.



In everyday life, near misses are important because they're a chance to learn. They're early warning signals for possible dangers in the future.

Think of the classic banana skin. It's on the floor in a supermarket. You step on it, but you don't slip. There's no accident – but there could have been. It's a near miss. What would you do? Leave it on the floor? Pick it up and put it somewhere safe? Tell a shop assistant? Report it to the shop manager? Let's be honest, most of us wouldn't report it to anyone. But perhaps we should?

Good employers welcome reports of near misses as an opportunity to improve safety and prevent future accidents. A ‘no blame’ culture encourages employees to report problems, without fear. This is really important in high-risk industries like aviation, nuclear power, healthcare and rail transport.

So next time you think ‘Thank God! It could have been so much worse!’, you can also think ‘What can be learned from this?’

Questions

- 1 What happened on 23 March 1989?
- 2 What could have happened?
- 3 What is a ‘near miss’?