

EXAMPLE OF A PROMPT SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS OF WITNESSES

This is intended as an aide memoir/prompt sheet *only* and gives examples of the types of questions to ask; it is intended as a guide only and should be augmented, expanded or amended in a manner appropriate to the individual Investigation.

This example prompt sheet/question set is specific to the *initial* interview of a *witness* at the *evidence gathering* stage of an investigation. These sort of interviews are intended to establish the initial lines of inquiry; they are not intended to perform any analysis (see note below on not asking “why?” at this stage).

BEFORE YOU START - BEWARE OF YOUR OWN PREJUDICE

(You will have your own opinions, put them to one side; your job is to find out what happened so that you can stop it happening again. Your opinion about somebody/something may be valid – however if you limit your investigation to proving that your opinion is correct, you *have* limited your investigation; and that will limit your ability to prevent the same accident happening again)

START WITH A GENERAL INTERVIEW (TAKE NOTES)

GET A BROAD PICTURE OF WHAT THE WITNESS KNOWS

USE *VERY* OPEN QUESTIONS

TELL ME WHAT YOU SAW/WHAT HAPPENED?

EXPLAIN WHAT YOU SAW/WHAT HAPPENED?

DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SAW/WHAT HAPPENED?

IF THEN TAKING A STATEMENT

Remember - Witnesses can/will make mistakes; they will remember what they think they've seen; they will have an opinion about what happened and that can start to affect their memory of what they actually saw. The purpose of a statement (rather than just an interview) is to help the witness search their memory for what they actually saw/heard/smelt/felt and to separate that from what anyone may have told them about an incident. The statement should contain a series of discrete facts.

(e.g. “My name is John Smith. I work for Fred Bloggs & Co Ltd. I am an Engineer. I have worked for Fred Bloggs & Co Ltd for about two years. I make widgets. I work in the workshop every day. An incident happened last Wednesday. Richard fell and hurt his arm. I saw it happen. It happened in the workshop. Richard fell off a ladder. I do not know which ladder, it was a stepladder. I cannot remember what time the incident happened, it was in the morning. There was another witness in the area. I was not sure, at the time, who that other witness was. I was told by Tom, on Thursday, that the other witness was Harry. Tom told me Richard has broken his arm.” etc).

DO NOT USE LEADING QUESTIONS

DO NOT MAKE A STATEMENT/DECLARATION IN THE QUESTION

DO NOT INFORM THE WITNESS (your information may be wrong)

DO NOT ASSUME ANYTHING

CHECK INFORMATION AS YOU GO ALONG

STICK TO FACTUAL INFORMATION

AVOID HEARSAY (Rumour)

AVOID OPINION

TRY NOT TO REPEAT INFORMATION (It is frustrating for the witness)
DO NOT CORRECT THE WITNESS (you may be the one that's wrong)
STICK TO WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW.

THINK *VERY CAREFULLY* BEFORE ASKING “WHY?” AT THE INITIAL “EVIDENCE GATHERING” STAGE OF AN INVESTIGATION – “WHY?” IS STARTING TO ANALYSE AND ANALYSIS WILL LIMIT THE INVESTIGATION;

THE INVESTIGATION *WILL* NEED TO BE LIMITED AT SOME POINT. IF THE INVESTIGATION IS LIMITED BEFORE THE LINES OF INQUIRY ARE PROPERLY ESTABLISHED THEN ROOT CAUSES OF THE INCIDENT CAN BE MISSED.

BETTER TO COLLECT ALL OF THE FACTUAL INFORMATION; ANALYSE IT; AND *THEN* ASK CERTAIN WITNESSES WHY CERTAIN THINGS WERE DONE CERTAIN WAYS

Prompt Sheet/Question Set:

NAME OF THE WITNESS
WHO EMPLOYS THEM
Co. REGISTERED OFFICE ADDRESS
HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN EMPLOYED BY THIS Co.
WHAT ARE THEY EMPLOYED AS (JOB TITLE)
HOW LONG HAVE THEY WORKED IN THIS ROLE
WHAT IS THE FACTORY/INCIDENT ADDRESS
WHO OWNS THE FACTORY
WHAT IS THE WORK ACTIVITY AT THAT FACTORY
WHERE IN THE FACTORY DO THEY WORK
DO THEY WORK ANYWHERE ELSE
WHAT DO THEY DO
WHAT ARE THEIR SPECIFIC DUTIES
WHAT EXPERIENCE HAVE THEY GOT
WHAT QUALIFICATIONS HAVE THEY GOT
WHAT TRAINING HAVE THEY HAD
WHAT INSTRUCTIONS HAVE THEY HAD
WHAT INFORMATION HAVE THEY HAD
WHO TELLS THEM WHAT TO DO
WHO SUPERVISES THEM WHEN THEY WORK
HOW ARE THEY SUPERVISED
HOW OFTEN ARE THEY SUPERVISED
DO THEY WORK ON THEIR OWN OR AS PART OF A TEAM
DO THEY MANAGE ANYBODY
WHO PROVIDES THEIR TOOLS
WHO PROVIDES THEIR PPE
HAVE THEY SEEN THE COMPANY SAFETY POLICY
HAVE THEY SEEN ANY WRITTEN RISK ASSESSMENTS
HAVE THEY SEEN ANY WRITTEN SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK
WHO CARRIES OUT MAINTENANCE
HOW IS MAINTENANCE ORGANISED
HOW DO THEY REPORT H&S PROBLEMS
WHO DO THEY REPORT H&S PROBLEMS TO

INCIDENT DETAILS

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN (DATE AND TIME)
WHERE DID IT HAPPEN (INSIDE OR OUTSIDE)
WHAT WAS THE WEATHER LIKE (OUTSIDE)
WHAT WAS THE LIGHTING LIKE (INSIDE)
HOW NOISEY WAS THE AREA
WHO WAS INVOLVED
WHO ELSE WAS THERE
WHAT WERE THE WITNESSES DOING
WHAT DID THE WITNESS SEE
WHAT DID THE WITNESS HEAR
WHAT DID THE WITNESS SMELL
WHAT PLANT WAS INVOLVED
WHAT HAPPENED
WHAT INJURIES
WHAT ACTION WAS TAKEN IMMEDIATELY

MACHINERY (MEASURABLES & PHOTOS)
TYPE OF TOOLING
BLADE DIAMETER
POWER
SPEED
REACH IN DISTANCES
EMERGENCY STOP
GUARDING
MAKE
MODEL NUMBER
SERIAL NUMBER
AGE / WHEN WAS IT MANUFACTURED
WHERE WAS IT MANUFACTURED
IS IT CE MARKED
OWNER / SUPPLIER / OPERATOR
HOW LONG HAD IT BEEN IN OPERATION
WHAT MAINTENANCE HAS BEEN DONE
STATE OF EQUIPMENT
STATE OF THE GUARDING
WHO KNEW IT WAS LIKE THIS
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN IN THIS STATE
WHO ELSE USES THIS EQUIPMENT
WHEN IS IT USED
WHERE IS IT USED
WHAT IS IT USED FOR
HOW IS IT USED
INFORMATION
INSTRUCTION
TRAINING
SUPERVISION
HEATING
LIGHTING
STATE OF FLOORS
CUSTOM AND PRACTICE OF OPERATION

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR EYE WITNESSES (for serious incidents):

1. AMOUNT OF TIME UNDER OBSERVATION
2. DISTANCE (BETWEEN WITNESS AND INCIDENT)
3. VISIBILITY (AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT)
4. OBSTRUCTION (ANYTHING TO IMPEDE THE VIEW)
5. KNOWN (KNOWN OR SEEN BEFORE? – HOW/WHEN/WHERE?)
6. ANY SPECIFIC REASON TO REMEMBER
7. TIME LAPSE (BETWEEN INCIDENT AND STATEMENT)
8. ERROR OF MATERIAL DISCREPANCY (BETWEEN FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT ACCOUNTS)
9. DOES THE WITNESS NEED GLASSES
10. WAS THE WITNESS WEARING GLASSES