

Prevention of Slip, Trip, and Fall Injuries

Have you ever slipped, tripped, or fallen? Your first thought is always, "I hope nobody just saw what happened." Each of us has at one time taken the plunge by walking too fast on a slippery surface, tripped over that crazy crack in the sidewalk, or has forgotten or missed a step while taking the stairs. Slips, trips and falls are the most frequent accidents leading to personal injury, second only to motor vehicle accidents. Estimates are that 15 to 20 percent of all workers' compensation costs are due to slips, trips and falls. According to the National Safety Council (NSC), the major cause of accidental deaths and injuries in America are slip-and-fall accidents.

The NSC cites fall hazards such as hidden steps, smooth surfaces, wet floors, loose or irregular surfaces, oil and grease. Other hazards to be considered include; unsafe stairs, obstructed aisles, improper shoes, moving too fast and poor lighting.

Good housekeeping in walk and working areas can contribute to safety and the prevention of falls. One method which promotes good housekeeping in work environments is the painting of yellow lines to identify working and walking areas. These areas should never be obstructed by objects of any kind.

The hazards of a slick surface can be compounded by wearing the wrong footwear. Some examples of slippery surfaces include; cool rooms, freezers, deli areas, meat rooms, bakery areas and storage areas. It is no wonder that slip, trip and fall accidents account for about 80 percent of all accidents that happen in food service establishments. Wearing slip-resistant footwear is one answer to slips and their resultant fall and injury.

Inadequate lighting, wearing sunglasses in low-light areas, moving between areas of different lighting levels, and carrying oversized objects can obstruct one's vision and result in a slip or a trip. Walking too fast or running is also a major problem, as is not using handrails.

Workers at high elevations such as ladders and platforms should be protected from falling by some kind of protective device and/or equipment such as a lifeline, lanyard, safety belt or harness.

Falls from ladders can be prevented by all of the following safety practices: The ladder should be made of an appropriate material (do not use a metal ladder near electricity), be of an adequate length, be equipped with slip-resistant pads, be set at an appropriate angle, be inspected for cracks, loose rungs, splinter and sharp edges, keeping them clean and dry and to use both hands to climb up and down on the ladder.

Falls from vehicles and equipment can be deterred by not allowing extra riders, keeping steps clean and dry, using a good hand-hold before stepping up and down. One should always face the vehicle or bed of a truck or wagon when stepping up or down.

The most important protection for your feet is wearing proper footwear for the job you have.

- o The soles and heels should be slip-resistant.
- o The shoe should support the ankle and foot by having a good arch support or cushion.
- o You can also purchase arch supports or cushions for your shoes and work boots that will reduce stress to your feet, knees and back.
- o For certain types of jobs the toe of the shoe should resist crushing injuries (Steel Toe).

When we share the responsibility for safety in the workplace, everyone wins!!