

Slips, Trips, and Falls: Boring Everyday Accidents?

Slips, trips, and falls are among the most common workplace accidents, and they cause a lot of very costly—and painful—injuries every year. It may surprise you to learn that slips, trips, and falls account for about 31 percent of all work-related injuries at EOC.

Everyone has certainly slipped, tripped, or fallen at least once. More likely, you've had several falls during your lifetime. Fortunately, many such accidents are minor. But some can be serious—such as second level falls from ladders or other high places.

Why Do We Fall?

The consensus among safety professionals is that almost all falls can be prevented. It's simply a matter of learning how to recognize fall hazards and making the effort to avoid them.

When you fall, you lose your balance and footing. Your center of gravity is displaced and the fall is inevitable. You may be thrown off balance by slipping on a wet floor or tripping over an object in your way. Once you lose your footing and support, there's no place to go but down.

Falls often occur at ground level because of slippery surfaces caused by grease, water, or ice. Even if you have a sturdy, slip-resistant floor, a slight contamination from dust, water or grease can make the surface slippery. The use of inappropriate footwear, poor lighting, and obstacles in walkways and on stairs can also contribute to slips, trips, and falls.

Another common fall hazard is the unsafe or incorrect use of stepping stools or ladders. Climbing on chairs, boxes, or shelving to access higher levels is a very unsafe work practice that will almost always lead to injury.

Even in the supposedly safe environment of an office, falls are the most common type of injury. Tripping over an open desk or file drawer is one frequent hazard. Falls can also occur when an office worker bends down to reach something while seated in an unstable chair. Tripping over electrical cords is another typical office fall.

Step Up to a Safer Workplace

Here are some simple safety tips that will help you eliminate slips, trips, and falls:

- Wear safe shoes with solid support.
- Walk, don't run.
- Be observant; watch your step.
- Hold the railing on the stairs.
- Walk with extra care on wet surfaces; take smaller steps.
- Never leave a desk drawer open.
- Pick up dropped pencils, paper clips, and rubber bands that can cause you or a co-worker to skid.
- Immediately clean up all spilled materials or liquids.
- Keep all corridors and passageways clear of debris, boxes, and storage.
- If you must climb, use a ladder. Do not use chairs or up-turned wastepaper basket in the place of a ladder.
- Be cautious of electrical cords.

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