



# Safety Newsletter

January, 2013.

## This Month's Topic: Slips, Trips, and Falls

As we begin a new year and regular work routines, let's be mindful of safety hazards in and around our surroundings.

Each year thousands of people are injured as a result of slip and fall incidents both at home and in the workplace. By identifying potential hazards, you can reduce the likelihood of a slip and fall incident.

Slips occur when there is too little friction or traction between your feet (footwear) and walking/working surface, resulting in loss of balance, and falling. You fall when you are too far off your center of balance. There are two types of fall. Fall at the same level/elevation, for instance, fall to same walking or working surface; and fall to different level/elevation. Many people are injured with strains, sprains, and broken and fractured bones from falls each year.

### Common Causes of Slips, Trips, and Falls

There are a number of common causes of slips, trips, and falls:

- ❖ Unsafe ladders or the unsafe use of ladders
- ❖ Unsafe stairs
- ❖ Obstructions in walkways or on stairs
- ❖ Slippery or uneven surfaces
- ❖ Improper shoes
- ❖ Moving too fast
- ❖ Poor lighting
- ❖ Being tired or distracted
- ❖ Not paying attention

### Identifying Hazards That Might Cause You to Slip, Trip, or Fall

- **Stairs** - Stairs should be checked before use to make sure that:
  - ◆ Steps aren't slippery, worn, or broken
  - ◆ Railings aren't missing or loose
  - ◆ Lighting isn't too dim or nonexistent
- **Ramps and Loading Docks** - These should have handrails and nonslip surfaces. Be especially alert when they are slippery from moisture or oil.
- **Level Ground** - A large number of slips, trips, and falls happen on level ground, especially if the surface is wet or worn.
- **Ladders** - Ladders should not be used if they have any missing, broken, or loose parts. Inspect ladders before each use for:
  - ◆ Loose or broken rungs or steps
  - ◆ Missing or broken spreaders, tie rods, and braces

**NOTE:** If you fall try to minimize the injury by either:

- Rolling with the fall, or
- Bending your elbows and knees so your legs and arms absorb the fall



### Facts

- ✦ Falls kill over 12,000 people a year, with 1,200 deaths occurring at work.
- ✦ Falls are the biggest cause of accidental death after traffic incidents.
- ✦ Thirty-three thousand people a year are disabled from falling on stairs.
- ✦ Most falling incidents can be prevented if you look where you're going, know what hazards to look for, and maintain a clean and safe work area.



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### Protection against Slipping, Tripping, and Falling Hazards

It is recommended that you follow the safety procedures listed below to prevent slips, trip, and falls:

- Keep everything in its proper place and put things away after use.
- Check the condition of stairs and fix or report the following:
  - ◆ Missing or broken steps
  - ◆ Missing or loose railing
  - ◆ Items left on steps
  - ◆ Inadequate lighting
- Use railing when climbing up or down stairs.
- Make sure stairs, ladders, and guardrails are in good condition.
- Fix or report any floor problems immediately:
  - ◆ Loose or missing tiles
  - ◆ Warped wood planks
  - ◆ Turned-up rug edges
- Keep walkways and aisles clear of obstacles.
- Keep drawers closed
- Dispose of trash promptly and properly
- Keep areas being cleaned or repaired blocked off and labeled
- Clean up spills and leaks right away
- Make sure lighting is adequate; use flashlights if light is too dim
- Walk, don't run
- Walk slowly with a sliding motion on slippery or uneven surfaces
- Wear sensible shoes with nonskid soles and flat heels, and be especially careful around wet or slippery surfaces.
- Beware of loose pant cuffs, you could trip over them
- Keep your hands at your sides, not in your pockets, for balance
- Keep all four chair legs on the floor
- Step around obstructions
- Pay attention to where you're going and what might be in your way

### Don't:

- Keep machines, tools, or other materials on the floor
- Leave cords, power cables, or air hoses in walkways
- Carry a load you can't see over, especially on stairs
- Jump off platforms or loading docks

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## Construction Falls Safety Tips:

Falls from an elevated surface, account for one third of all serious injuries in construction.

Always maintain three points of contact while entering, or exiting vehicles, heavy equipment, climbing stairs, using a ladder, or walking on elevated surfaces. Remember to watch your feet, watch where you are going, and make use of the handrails that are available.

The 3-point contact, or climb, means that you always have three body points in contact with handrails and steps at any given time. For example, use two feet and one hand, or two hands and one foot. Always hold on with one hand while you reach for the next hand hold.

## What can we do to protect ourselves?

- Recognize the danger.
- Look at your route – What are the potential hazards?
- Check handles and stairs to be sure they are clear of obstructions, or in poor condition.
- Maintain three points of contact.



“Accidents can happen even in places we are most familiar with; good housekeeping habits and watching our walkways/work areas can definitely go a long way in preventing accidents.”

- Dickson Ufombah  
Sr. Staff Engineer