

TOOLBOX TALKS

Slips and Falls Prevention

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How often do you perform a common job without realizing you are creating a potential danger? Such a situation occurred when a janitorial assistant was mopping a set of stairs just before a coffee break. This seemingly simple task was actually creating a situation where many people could potentially slip and fall on the wet surface. Fortunately an observant employee took action to post signs and a potentially dangerous situation was averted.

An unguarded wet floor is only one of the many causes of workplace accidents. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 20.9 percent of all workplace injuries for the calendar year 2009 cases were due to injuries sustained from all types of falls on the job.

It is important to spot unsafe conditions that may lead to slips and falls and prevent them before they happen.

- Clean off your shoes and boots on the doormat when you enter a building.
- Walk safely and deliberately and avoid sharp changes in direction.
- Be alert for deposits of water, food, grease, oil, sawdust, soap and other debris on the floor. Even small quantities of these substances can make you slip and fall.
- Watch for items that can become tripping hazard, such as trash, unused materials, extension cords, tools, and carts left in the aisles and walkways.
- When equipment or supplies are left in walkways, report it to your supervisor.
- Make sure the trash ends up in the trash can, and not on the floor where someone could trip or slip on it.

- Short cuts through machine areas invite accidents so be sure to stay in the aisles and walkways.
- Focus on the task at hand – when you lose concentration, you make yourself vulnerable to unsafe conditions.
- Take advantage of handrails on stairs and ramps. They are there to protect you from falls.
- When a load is too heavy or bulky to negotiate up or down stairs by yourself, ask for help or use the elevator.

The worst falls, which often result in serious injuries or death, are from heights like ladders and scaffolding. Be sure to practice ladder and scaffolding safety.

Ladders

- Use a ladder this is placed on a firm surface, is the correct length and is in good condition.
- Never climb a ladder placed on machinery, crates, stock or boxes.
- Keep the ladder's base one foot away from the wall for every four feet of ladder height.
- Don't overreach
- Losing your balance, climbing the ladder with your hands full, or carrying tools in your hands instead of the correct pouch can result in an injurious fall.

Scaffolds

- Be sure that scaffolds are assembled according to manufacturers' specifications.



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- Check carefully for defects before using. Working and standing planks need to be level and clean.
- Use toeboards to prevent tools from falling and slipping.
- You and other employees must work together to practice scaffold safety.

Slips and falls occur every day as a result of inattention. You can minimize accidents and injuries by practicing safety.

- Let's review the safety practices one more time: Be on the lookout for unsafe conditions that may lead to slips and falls.
- Watch out for foreign substances on the floor.
- Clean footwear thoroughly when entering the building.
- Keep walkways and aisles clear of trash and potential hazards.
- Use handrails on stairs or ramps.
- Ask for help when a load is heavy or bulky, or use the elevator.
- Practice ladder safety.
- Be sure scaffolds are properly assembled.
- Remember safe lifting techniques.

This Take 5 for Safety was published with information from the Occupational Safety Health Administration and TDI-DWC and is considered accurate at the time of publication



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