



FACILITIES SAFETY MEETING

Slips, Trips, and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are the leading cause of deaths in construction, killing 12,000 workers and causing 240,000 disabling injuries each year. This represents 22.5% of all construction injuries. While most of these injuries are due to falls from elevation, far too often workers are seriously injured by slipping on bolts left on the ground, tripping on a 2x4 or by stepping into an uncovered hole. Office workers often trip and fall on carpets fall out of their chairs or off step ladders, or when simply climbing stairs. Here at the lab, slip, trip and fall injuries were the second highest mode of injury last year and represent a significant number this year. Most slip, trip and fall incidents (75%) involve some type of liquid (spilled water or coffee, wet floors from mopping, ice/frost). Most (70%) of falls on stairs occur on the top and bottom 3 steps. These result in 1.7 million hospital visits each year costing \$10 billion.

Most of these types of slips, trips, and falls are caused by simply not paying attention to your surroundings. Hazards include:

- Surface factors. Parking lot wheel stops and uneven surfaces can trip you up. Acorns, steep terrain, wet, frosty, and slippery surfaces such as trench plates, decking, rebar mats, and manhole covers are some of the slip hazards found at the lab.
- Individual factors. Age (most involve workers over 45), poor eyesight, new glasses (bi-focal), poor lighting, and lack of sobriety can contribute to slips, trips, and falls.
- Task factors. These include attention focused on other tasks, poor housekeeping, and time constraints (in a hurry).
- Footwear factors. Appropriate footwear for job or for the conditions present is an important factor.

While it is important to be mindful of these risks, it is best to prevent an unsafe condition.

- ⇒ Pick up stray pieces of lumber, iron, bolts, etc. Keep tools and materials out of the way.
- ⇒ Stop and clean up spills immediately and warn others of the hazard.
- ⇒ Move extension cords, welding and grounding cables out of the way and avoid laying cords across aisles or doorways. Keep cords in your office out of the way and close file cabinet drawers.
- ⇒ Clean up after your work has been completed.
- ⇒ Highlight short projections through floors such as pipes or conduits to increase their visibility;
- ⇒ Cover small floor holes and excavations or erect warning and barrier systems;
- ⇒ In the winter, watch for frost and ice build up on catwalks, stairs and walkways. Cover plates and small metallic hole covers can be slippery when wet or frosty.
- ⇒ Don't jump from equipment. Don't use tires or wheel hubs as step when getting on or off equipment. Use the "three-point system" for getting on or off of equipment and trucks. Don't assume that the ground outside the cab of equipment or vehicles is level. Check it before you get out;
- ⇒ Scrape off any mud, grease or oil from your shoes *before* you start climbing onto equipment, scaffolds and stairs;
- ⇒ Don't run up or down stairs. Use the handrails. Avoid carrying heavy or bulky objects especially if your vision is obscured.
- ⇒ Watch out for rocks, acorns, branches, spills, curbs and tire stops in the parking areas;
- ⇒ Use caution when sitting as some of our chairs can roll away when you attempt to sit down.
- ⇒ Wear the appropriate shoes for the conditions at the lab. This could mean keeping different pairs with you (dress shoes for the office, work boots for jobsite inspections). High heels are not made for climbing some of our steep inclines. Soles should be in good condition. Proper fit is important.