

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We have all heard examples about the seriousness of slips and falls in our business. They happen suddenly. They're totally unexpected. And the result of a slip or fall can be a painful and possibly permanent injury that could change your entire life.

Most of these accidents result from slips or trips that happen at floor level, rather than from high places. About 75 percent of these slips and trips occur on walking surfaces, such as floors, stairs and sidewalks. Basically, slips and falls can happen almost anywhere and can be caused by a number of things. Trying to catch your balance when you slip, for example, can pull muscles, tear ligaments and cause permanent damage to your back, even if you avoid falling down.

Standing on a bumper to clean your windshield is an open invitation for a bad slip or fall. Be especially careful of your footing on ladders attached to trucks and catwalks, and always face the ladder when climbing or descending.

Most trips, slips and falls are the result of unsure footing. They can occur on any surface that is covered with mud, snow, water, oil, ice, grease or any other slippery substance. So whenever you see spilled liquid on a dock or garage floor, clean it up immediately.

When entering or getting out of a cab, footing stability can be jeopardized. Always face the cab when going in or out, and use the handgrips. Mats, rugs and runners are also hazardous if they can slip or slide, or are torn, curled up or loose. Uneven or defective surfaces, littered floors, telephone wires and electrical cords, open drawers or anything else that projects from the walking surface may cause a fall.

Stairways present another tripping problem, whether they're a poorly lighted set inside a building or steps outside from the road to the dock. Material, cartons, boxes or other items should not be stored on stairs. Proper lighting, without glare, shadows or violent contrasts between floor areas, and the condition of workers' shoes are also important.

Remembering can prevent falls:

1. Not to climb over freight or use it as a makeshift platform

2. Not to jump off docks or trucks
3. To carry only what you can reasonably handle and keep your balance
4. To stay alert and always expect the unexpected at all levels

Be careful. Watch your step. Report all hazardous conditions to your supervisor immediately, unless you can take care of them. The important thing is not to let slips and falls put you down.

If you have the statistics for slips and falls for your particular institution, you may want to discuss them with employees during this safety talk.

Let's examine the 1979 Division of Safety and Hygiene statistics to see just what types of accidents occurred last year in Ohio's hospitals and nursing homes. Looking at the hospital statistics, we can see that about 46 percent of the accidents that resulted in claims being filed with The Industrial Commission of Ohio were slips or overexertion. Approximately 19 percent of the accidents and injuries were same-level falls--a same level fall is not falling off a ladder or other height.

The number of same-level falls was even a little higher in nursing homes. We must remember that these numbers tell us only about the claims filed with The Industrial Commission of Ohio. Additional accidents and injuries have undoubtedly taken place. Statistics for past years were similar.

Instructor

At this time discuss the statistics of your institution, if available. Slips and overexertion are the leading causes of accidents and injuries that result in compensation claims in Ohio's health care facilities, with falls ranking next. That is why we need to spend some time today discussing slips and falls and what can be done to prevent them. Perhaps the best way to prevent slips and falls is, you guessed it, good housekeeping in every work area.

Rooms, work areas, hallways and especially steps should be kept free of equipment and other objects that block traffic or present tripping hazards. When not in use, tools and other equipment should be kept in proper storage places. Remember there's a place for everything and everything has its place.

1. A spill should be cleaned up immediately to eliminate the danger. In addition to good housekeeping, there are some other employee practices that can help prevent slips and falls:
2. If you notice tripping hazards, such as bulges in carpeting, loose floor boards or raised edges, report these to the supervisor so repairs can be made.

3. Place electrical cords and/or telephone cables so that they do not lie in heavily traveled areas. If they must lie in heavily traveled areas, anchor them with electrical tape.
4. Housekeepers should mop only half of a hallway at once, leaving the other half open for passage. They should take time to post 'Wet Floor' signs. You and others should respect the signs.
5. Walk through hallways and on stairways.
6. Use handrails when traveling on stairs.
7. Do not climb on storeroom shelving. If you must reach high shelves, never substitute crates, boxes or other objects for ladders.
8. Make sure stepladders are equipped with safety feet and are in excellent condition.
9. Wear proper footwear on the job at all times.

The safety rules for preventing slips and falls really are just 'common sense' rules, which you have probably heard dozens of times before. Nevertheless, a look at the statistics tells us that they need to be repeated until we do our part to prevent those disastrous slips and falls, which are costing people time and money and a lot of pain as well. Let's concentrate on safety today and every day to prevent slips and falls!

GENERAL SAFETY REVIEW

This is a time to review all safety concerns, not just today's topic. Keep your notes on this page before, during and after the safety meeting.

Are you aware of any safety hazards from any other crews? Point out any hazards other crews are creating that this crew should know about. Tell the crew what you intend to do about those hazards.

Do we have any other safety business? Discuss any past issues or problems. Report any progress of investigations and action taken.

Have there been any accidents, near misses or complaints? Discuss any accidents, near misses, and complaints that have happened since the last safety meeting. Also recognize the safety contributions made by members of the crew.

Please remember, we want to hear from you about any health and safety issues that come up. If we don't know about problems, we can't take action to fix them.

ENDING THE MEETING

Circulate Sign-Off Form.

Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.

Refer action items for follow-up.

Do you have any Safety Recommendations?

Do you have any Job Specific Topics you would like us to discuss?

Comments
