

SAFETY MATTERS

SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Did you know that slips, trips, and falls are second only to automobile accidents in causing personal injury? On stairways alone, falls result in almost two million disabling injuries yearly. There are thousands more minor injuries caused by slips, trips, and falls each year. Most alarming of all is the fact that industrial falls cause over 1000 deaths each year. Most of the suggestions in this article can be used on the job and at home.

Slips occur when there is too little friction between a person's feet and the walking surface. Many factors can cause a slip. Ice, oil, water, cleaning fluids, and other slippery substances are probably the most obvious causes. However, the flooring may be inappropriate. Maybe the flooring is a slick material, or the person who slips may not be wearing proper shoes. To prevent slips, avoid walking in areas which pose slipping hazards if at all possible. Always promptly clean up spills of slippery substances. Better yet, prevent the spills in the first place. If an area is a chronic problem, re-route foot traffic in order to avoid it. If flooring is a problem, replace it or coat it with a non-slip surfacing material. Always follow your company's safe shoe policy. Most safe shoe policies require a slip-resistant sole.

Trips occur when a person's foot contacts an object and they are thrown off balance. The main cause of tripping is obvious—anytime something is in a walkway it could cause someone to trip. Another culprit is an object which projects into the walkway—perhaps material stored low on a shelf. Poor lighting and uneven walking surfaces also cause tripping. Prevention of trips is simple but does require diligence. Keep objects that could cause someone to trip out of the way. Repair uneven flooring and install proper lighting if required.

Falls can be caused by a number of things. Slips and trips frequently result in a fall. Falls also occur for other reasons. Improper use of ladders and scaffolding can result in a fall—usually a very serious one. Falls also happen when people climb objects without using fall protection equipment. Don't risk serious injury by taking shortcuts. If you are working on a ladder, scaffold, or other elevated platform, make sure you know the requirements for using them safely. Always use fall protection equipment when it is required.

Slips, trips, and falls cause numerous injuries every day. But they are among the easiest hazards to correct. Take the time to look around your worksite for these hazards and work to prevent them. Take care not to cause any slip, trip, or fall hazards as you go about your daily activities. Don't let a slip, trip, or fall keep you from enjoying all that life has to offer.