

Toolbox Talk

Fall Protection

Avoiding Slips, Trips, and Falls at the Worksite

Almost all falls can be prevented. All it takes is learning how to recognize fall hazards and how to prevent them.

Everyone is exposed to fall hazards both on and off the job. Here are some tips to reduce your risk of injury or death:

- Consider if a task can be performed without exposure to fall hazards.
- Complete training for fall hazards when available or required.
- Take breaks when necessary physical exertion to reach elevated spaces is required.

Slips

- A slip is a loss of balance when there isn't enough friction between your feet and the walking surface.
- If you must walk on a low-friction, slippery surface, take small, deliberate steps.
- Consider adding abrasives to increase traction on surfaces that are frequently wet or are naturally slippery.
- Wear footwear, which will prevent slipping and tripping. Avoid slippery soles and wear well-fitting, correctly fastened footwear.
- Keep walking surfaces free of water, oil, mud, and ice. Watch especially for slippery surfaces on sidewalks, stairways, entryways, around machinery, lunch areas, and washrooms.

Trips

- A trip happens when your foot strikes an object, and you are moving with enough momentum to be thrown off-balance.
- Keep clutter picked up. Common causes of falls are debris, tools & materials on the floor.
- Report any walking surface hazards such as obstacles, loose carpets, tile, or stair treads. Make sure openings and holes are adequately guarded.
- Close desk and cabinet drawers and doors as soon as you use them. Many accidents are caused by tripping over them.
- Arrange workspaces so there are clear passages for walking. Remove or cover cords and cables on walking routes. Store boxes of materials away from traffic areas.
- Stick to established traffic routes. Taking shortcuts through areas, that contain unexpected obstacles, can cause trips.

Falls

- A fall occurs when your body is thrown too far off its center of balance to be able to recover.
- Don't jump down from an excessive height or across an unreasonable distance.
- Properly maintain the condition of stairs and handrails.

- Never use makeshift climbing devices. Get a step stool or ladder, and use it properly, if you must reach a higher surface. Don't stand on chairs.
- Use a restraint system instead of a fall arrest system wherever possible.
- If you're using a fall arrest system, make sure it's properly rigged to minimize the fall distance and ensure the freefall distance is less than four feet. You must have the clearance necessary to avoid striking the ground or the structure upon which you're working.

Visibility

Work areas and traffic routes must be well-lit. Report or replace burned-out light fixtures. Do not store materials where they will block the light from windows or lighting systems. Keep windows and light fixtures clean. While dim light would ordinarily be considered a contributor to falls, light that is too bright can also create conditions, which cause you to fall.

Understanding Balance

A fall occurs when you lose your balance and your footing. In short, your center of gravity is displaced and there's nowhere to go but down. You may be thrown off balance by a slip (on a wet floor, for example) or a trip (over an obstacle in your path), but once you lose your footing and support, a fall is in-avoidable.

Stairs

Stairs can be dangerous, especially around construction sites. Loss of traction causes the highest number of slipping and falling accidents and is usually due to water, grease, mud, or other slippery substances. Slips are more likely to happen when you hurry or run, when you wear the wrong type of footwear, or when you don't pay attention to where you're walking. Because we use stairs so often, it's easy to forget that they can be hazardous. Follow these safety precautions to avoid slipping:

- Use handrails.
- Never run up or down stairs or jump from landing to landing.
- Never carry a load that you can't see over, especially when going up or down steps.
- Never store materials, tools, or equipment on stairways.
- Always watch where you're stepping.
- Report broken stair treads, handrails, or other unsafe conditions.
- Keep stairs free from water, grease, oil, dirt, mud, and other slippery substances.
- Clean up spills immediately.

Slips, trips, and falls continue to be one of the leading causes of accidental injury and death. Do everything you can to make the workplace safe for everyone and practice the tips outlined above. Don't engage in horseplay or perform activities on the job site that are not job-related.