



Keep An Eye Out for Slip, Trip and Fall Hazards



5 Minute Safety Talk

Slips, trips and falls are definitely no laughing matter.

In fact, following highway crashes, falls to a lower level are the second leading cause of preventable workplace fatalities according to *Injury Facts*®, 2017 Edition. Compared to falls to a lower level, falls on the same level tend to result in less severe, but more frequent injuries – more than 155,000 in 2014. With so much potential for harm, we should do everything possible to recognize fall hazards to prevent injuries from occurring.

View the World from a Safety Lens

The truth is that hazards are all around us. Sometimes it is difficult to see them, especially when we are working in familiar conditions. Instead of going through our usual routines, we should always stay vigilant and keep an eye out for safety. It could be as simple as noticing a tear in the carpeting, a box sticking out into a walkway or a spill on the floor.

While noticing something out of the ordinary is the first step, you must also know how to report a hazard in your organization. Perhaps you could clean up some water on the floor yourself, but stop and think – where is the water coming from? Is there a leaking ice machine in the break room? Your safety and facilities teams may need to step in. Or let's say it is a rainy day and people are tracking in water to the tile floor. Perhaps your organization needs to install a slip resistant mat or runner in the entryway. Don't just walk by and assume someone else will see a hazard or address it. You can be the catalyst to make these changes happen – you just need to keep your eyes open, think about the bigger picture and let someone know about your concerns.

Here are some other tips to help prevent falls to the same level:

- Don't hurry or walk too fast
- Watch where you are walking – even in familiar areas
- Avoid distractions like cell phones or reading while walking
- Wear proper footwear
- Look out for changes in elevation
- Don't obstruct your vision by carrying a large package – ask for help if needed
- Clean up spills immediately
- Pay attention to weather conditions

Prevent Falls from Heights

While not as common as falls to the same level, falls from heights are often deadlier. Fatal falls to a lower level typically involve injuries to the head or multiple body parts. Overall, about half of fatal falls to a lower level occur at heights of 20 feet or less, while 16 percent occur at heights of greater than 30 feet, according to *Injury Facts*, 2017 Edition.

Here are some tips to help prevent falls from heights:

- Be sure a job hazard analysis has been conducted and a fall protection plan is in place before beginning your work
- Wear the proper fall protection equipment for the job and be trained in how to use it
- Make sure fall prevention systems are in place, such as guardrails
- When using a ladder, maintain three points of contact at all times
- Do not use ladders outdoors in windy or inclement weather, and if the weather turns while you are on the ladder, descend immediately
- Place the base of the ladder on a firm, solid surface – never make your own "improvised" scaffolding

You can visit safety.nsc.org/fall-from-heights for more specific tips on falls from heights from the NSC Construction & Utilities Division.

Remember, if you fall, even if it is just a minor slip, please report it. Being involved in a fall doesn't make you "clumsy," and it is nothing to be ashamed of. Reporting every hazard and near miss can help to prevent something similar – or worse – from happening to someone else. Think about at least one change you can make today to help prevent yourself, or a coworker, from falling.



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