



Slips and Falls

HS93-019E (12-04)

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

How often do we perform a common job without realizing we are creating a potential danger? Such a situation occurred when a janitorial assistant was mopping a set of stairs just before coffee break. This seemingly simple task was actually creating a situation where many people could potentially slip and fall on the wet surface. Fortunately an observant coworker took action to post signs and a potentially dangerous situation was averted.

An unguarded wet floor is only one of the many causes of accidents. Approximately 13 percent of all Workers' Compensation cases are due to injuries sustained from falling or slipping on the job. It is important to spot unsafe conditions which may lead to slips and falls and prevent them before they happen.

In wet and snowy weather, the simple act of cleaning off our shoes and boots on the doormat when we enter the building is an effective deterrent to slipping and falling. Walking safely and deliberately and avoiding sharp changes in direction helps to keep us and others safe.

To avoid slips and falls, be alert for deposits of water, food, grease, oil, sawdust, soap and other debris on the floor. Even small quantities of these substances can make us fall. Many items can become tripping hazards, for example, trash, unused materials left in the aisles and walkways, extension cords, tools, and carts can create a hazard. When equipment or supplies are left in walkways, report it. If items are small, pick them up. Make sure that trash ends up in the trashcan, and not on the floor for someone to trip or slip on.

Short cuts through machine areas invite accidents so be sure to stay in the aisles and walkways. Focus on the task at hand—when we lose concentration we make ourselves vulnerable to unsafe conditions.

Handrails on stairs and ramps are there to protect us from falls so take advantage of them. When a load is too heavy or bulky to negotiate up or down stairs by ourselves, it makes sense to ask for help or use the elevator.

The worst falls, which often result in serious injuries or death, are from heights like ladders and scaffolding. Be sure to practice ladder safety and the proper use of scaffolding. Use a ladder that is placed on a firm surface, the correct length and in good condition. Never climb a ladder placed on machinery, crates, stock or boxes. Keep the ladder's base one foot away from the wall for every four feet of height. Don't overreach. Losing our balance, climbing the ladder with our hands full, or carrying tools in our hands instead of the correct pouch can result in an injurious fall.

Be sure that scaffolds are assembled according to manufacturers' specifications. Check carefully for defects before using. Working and standing planks need to be level and clean. Use toe boards to prevent tools from falling and workers from slipping. We must work together to practice scaffold safety.

Slips and falls occur every day as a result of inattention. We can minimize accidents and injuries by practicing safety. Let's review the safety practices one more time:

- be on the lookout for unsafe conditions which may lead to slips and falls
- watch out for foreign substances on the floor
- clean footwear thoroughly when entering the building
- keep walkways and aisles clear of trash and potential hazards
- use handrails on stairs or ramps
- ask for help when a load is heavy or bulky, or use the elevator
- practice ladder safety
- be sure scaffolds are properly assembled
- remember safe lifting techniques.

Remember to practice safety. Don't learn it by accident.

