

Catholic Mutual... "CARES"

Don't Fall For It! - Tips for Fall Prevention

It's probably happened to most of us at one time or another. That momentary lapse of attention or use of common sense while engaged in an activity - resulting in a slip, trip or fall. A stumble down a stairway... A trip over an uneven surface... Slipping on the ice... Falling from a chair. It can lead to a variety of regrettable events ranging from a simple bruised shin to an extremely serious injury.

There are a variety of situations that may cause slips, trips or falls:

- Wet or greasy floors
- Uneven walking surfaces
- Polished or freshly waxed floors
- Loose flooring, carpeting or mats
- Transition from one floor type to another
- Damaged or irregular steps
- Shoes with wet, muddy, greasy or oily soles
- Clutter
- Electrical cords or cables
- Open desk or file cabinet drawers
- Damaged ladders or improper use of a ladder
- Weather hazards — rain, sleet, ice, snow, hail, frost
- Wet leaves or pine needles

Here are some reminders to help you create a safer working environment:

1. Create Good Housekeeping Practices

Proper housekeeping is a routine. It is an ongoing procedure that is simply done as a part of each person's daily performance. To create an effective housekeeping program, there are three simple steps to get you started:

- Plan ahead — Know what needs to be done, who's going to do it and what the area should look like when you are done.
- Assign responsibilities — It may be necessary to assign a specific person or group of co-workers to clean up, although personal responsibility for cleaning up after oneself is preferred.
- Implement a program — Establish housekeeping procedures as a part of the daily routine.

2. Reduce Wet or Slippery Surfaces

The most frequently reported types of surfaces where these injuries occur include:

- Parking lots
- Sidewalks (or lack thereof)
- Food preparation areas
- Wet Floors

Traction on outdoor surfaces can change considerably when weather conditions change. Those conditions can then affect indoor surfaces as moisture is tracked in by pedestrian traffic.

Indoor control measures can help reduce the incidence of slips and falls:

- Use moisture-absorbent non-skid mats with beveled edges in entrance areas.
- Display “Wet Floor” signs as needed.
- Clean up spills immediately.

3. Avoid Creating Obstacles in Aisles and Walkways

Injuries can also result from trips caused by obstacles, clutter, materials and equipment in aisles, corridors, entranceways and stairwells. Proper housekeeping in work and traffic areas is still the most effective control measure in avoiding the proliferation of these types of hazards.

- Keep all work areas, passageways, storerooms and service areas clean and orderly.
- Avoid stringing cords, cables or air hoses across hallways or in any designated aisle.
- In office areas, avoid leaving boxes, files or briefcases in the aisles.
- Follow safe work practices, such as closing file cabinet drawers after use and picking up loose items from the floor.
- Conduct periodic inspections for slip and trip hazards.

4. Create and Maintain Proper Lighting

- Use proper illumination in walkways, staircases, ramps, hallways, basements, construction areas and dock areas.

- Keep work areas well-lit and clean.
- Upon entering a darkened room, always turn on the light first.
- Keep poorly lit walkways clear of clutter and obstructions.
- Keep areas around light switches clear and accessible.
- Repair fixtures, switches and cords immediately if they malfunction.

5. Wear Proper Shoes

The shoes we wear can play a big part in preventing falls. The slickness of the soles and the type of heels worn need to be evaluated to avoid slips, trips and falls. Shoelaces need to be tied correctly. Employees are expected to wear footwear appropriate for the duties of their work task.

6. THINK BEFORE YOU ACT!

It's human nature to let our guard down temporarily and be distracted by random thoughts, multi-tasking, or rushing to accomplish a task or get to a meeting which increases the chances of a slip, trip or fall. Taking shortcuts, not watching where one is going, using a cell phone, carrying materials which obstruct the vision, wearing sunglasses in low-light areas, not using designated walkways and speed are common factors in many on-the-job injuries.

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