Don’t Let Your Safety Slip Away



WHAT’S AT STAKE?

The banana peel has been a famous prop for slapstick comedy for decades, but there’s nothing funny about the number of injuries associated with slips, trips and falls. Slips, trip and falls consistently rank among the top causes of both disabling injuries and deaths in all types of workplaces, from construction sites, to manufacturing operations to warehouses to offices. In fact, the only other category of fatalities in the workplace that has higher numbers is motor vehicle accidents.

WHAT’S THE DANGER?

There are far less obvious slipping hazards than the classic banana peel. Items as small as paper clips or even a layer of dust can floor a worker in a fraction of a second. And many workers who slip on elevated surfaces end up falling and suffering double-whammy injuries.

Example

An experienced worker was in a shipping yard, loading a trailer with pallets of bagged cement, a job that he’d done for nearly 20 years. He climbed on top of the pallets to spread a tarp over them. In the process, the worker stepped on the wet and icy tarp, causing him to slip and fall from the trailer to the ground. He suffered severe head injuries and died the next day.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Learn to identify the many potential slipping, tripping and fall hazards in your workplace, such as:

- Uneven or sloped surfaces
- Wet or poorly drained floors
- Wet leaves, snow, ice or sand
- Dusty floors
- Loose mats
- Open drawers
- Cords or hoses stretched across a floor
- Improper ladder use
- Unsuitable footwear
- Unattended spills
- Wet footwear worn on a dry surface

- Poor lighting
- Loose floor boards, protruding nails or bumpy carpeting

(Related Article: Don’t Slip Up on fall Prevention)

Here are five ways you can help reduce slip, trip and fall hazards in your workplace:

1. Housekeeping problems create many hazards. Try to keep your work area clean and orderly. An item as seemingly harmless as a pencil can easily cause someone to slip. If you see any debris on the floor, pick it up.
2. An estimated 90 percent of slipping injuries involve wet floors. Keep work floors clean and as dry as possible. If you see an unattended spill on a floor, take a minute to wipe it up before someone slips on it.
3. Keep aisles, stairs and passageways clear of obstructions.
4. Report maintenance issues to your supervisor, such as loose floor boards or burned out light bulbs, especially in stairwells.
5. Kids aren’t the only ones at risk for tripping over untied shoelaces. Ensure that your work boots or shoes are properly tied. And remember that worn out tread or the wrong type of sole on your footwear dramatically increases your risk for slipping.

FINAL WORD

Falls always have an element of surprise. The surprise factor is what makes falls a standard comedy routine. But when they’re real, slips, trips and falls aren’t at all fun or funny.