Preventing Slips Trips and Falls – Quick Tips

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), slips, trips, and falls accounted for 16.5% of all the fatal occupational injuries in 2019. The BLS reported a preliminary total of 5,333 fatal work injuries for calendar year 2019. Of this total, 880 were associated with slips, trips, and falls. Falls to a lower level accounted for 711 / 80% of the fatal falls. In addition, of the 888,220 nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work recorded in private industry during 2019, 244,000 / 27% of the cases were associated with slips, trips, and falls. Falls on the same level (153,140) resulted in 10 median days away from work and falls to a lower level (48,040) resulted in 22 median days away from work.

Slips, trips, and falls included the following types of events:

- Slips and trips without falling: Injuries occurring when a worker catches him/herself from falling due to slip or trip
- Falling on the same level: Includes tripping, slipping, falling while sitting, and falling onto or against object on the same level
- Falling to a lower level: Includes falling from a collapsing structure, falling through surfaces, and falling from ladders, roofs, scaffolding or other structures
- Jumping to a lower level: Different from falls because they are controlled and voluntary

The most disabling workplace injuries and illnesses in 2017 amounted to $59 billion in direct workers' compensation costs, according to the 2020Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index (WSI). This translates into more than $1 billion a week spent by organizations on these injuries. Direct workers' compensation costs attributed to falls on the same level accounted for $10.84 billion and to falls to a lower level $5.71 billion.

The actual cost of work-related deaths and injuries is much greater than the cost of workers' compensation insurance alone. Per the National Safety Council's Injury Facts 2020 Edition, the total cost of work injuries in 2019 was $171.0 billion. This figure includes wage and productivity losses of $53.9 billion, medical expenses of $35.5 billion, and administrative expenses of $59.7 billion. This total also includes employers' uninsured costs of $13.3 billion, including the value of time lost by workers other than those with disabling injuries who were directly or indirectly involved in the injuries, and the cost of time required to investigate injuries, write up injury reports, and so forth. The total also includes damage to motor vehicles in work-related injuries of $5.0 billion and fire losses of $3.7

billion. The cost per worker in 2019 was $1,100. This includes the value of goods or services each worker must produce to offset the cost of work injuries. It is *not* the average cost of a work-related injury. The average cost per death in 2019 was $1,220,000 and the average cost per medically consulted injury was $42,000.

Regulations

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) General Industry standards for walking/working surfaces are found in 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1910 Subpart D, 1910.21 – 1910.30. Voluntary consensus standards are available from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP), ASTM and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Causes

There are many situations that may cause slips, trips and falls, such as:

- Uneven walking surfaces
- Spills
- Loose matting
- Weather-related conditions like rain, snow and/or ice
- Use of inappropriate footwear
- Walkway surfaces that are in disrepair
- Highly polished surfaces or floors that do not allow for adequate footwear traction
- Clutter
- Open desk or cabinet drawers

Prevention

The controls needed to help prevent slips, trips and falls include:

- Practicing good housekeeping
- Keeping floor surfaces clean and dry
- Providing adequate drainage in wet floor locations
- Ensuring wet floor warning signs are posted in and around wet floor locations
- Maintaining clear aisles and passageways
- Ensuring walkway surfaces are in good repair
- Keeping cords and hoses out of the way
- Reporting and cleaning up spills immediately
- Providing non-slip coatings or anti-skid surfaces
- Minimizing matting trip hazards
- Providing adequate lighting in all areas
- Eliminating uneven floor surfaces
- Setting standards for type(s) of footwear to be worn
- Training the workforce to take shorter, more vertical steps in tricky spots and to step over obstacles at an angle
- Establishing an "eyes on the path" and no running rule

Resource for Additional Information

For those looking to get additional information related to the prevention of slips, trips and falls, the National Floor Safety Institute (NFSI) is an organization that's dedicated to the cause. The NFSI is a non- profit organization that tests and certifies slip prevention floor products, conducts training on slip, trip and fall prevention and develops the standards related to the topic for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). All of their resources can be accessed at www.NFSI.org.

Sources

2020 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index
Bureau of Labor Statistics – Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Summary, 2019
Bureau of Labor Statistics – Employer-Reported Workplace Injury and Illnesses, 2019
National Safety Council, Injury Facts 2019® Edition
29 CFR 1910 Subpart D, 1910.21-1910.30
ASTM F1637-13 Practice for Safe Walking Surfaces
NFPA 101-2021 Life Safety Code
ICC A117.1-2017 Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities
ANSI/ASSE A1264.1-2017 Safety Requirements For Workplace Walking/Working Surfaces And Their Access; Workplace, Floor, Wall And Roof Openings; Stairs And Guardrail/Handrail Systems
ANSI/ASSE A1264-2-2012 Provision Of Slip Resistance On Walking/Working Surfaces