

Loss Prevention News

Provided by the Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool

Slips and Falls Prevention

June 2010

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. If you spill coffee or other liquid on a smooth floor surface, clean it up immediately or notify others until it can be cleaned up.

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 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. Accidents and injuries can be minimized by following these safety practices:

- Be on the lookout for unsafe conditions which may lead to slips and falls
- Clean up small spills immediately that you create or warn others of the condition
- 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



The TMLIRP Media Library includes #87 - *Slips, Trips & Falls*, #671 - *Small Falls are a Big Deal*, and #190 - *Stairways and Ladders: The First Step*. Refer to www.tmlirp.org or call 800-537-6655 and ask for the Loss Prevention Department.