Toolbox Talks

PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Almost one in every five work-related injuries results from a slip, trip or fall. Falls kill more than 12,000 people a year, about 1,200 of them at work. That makes them the biggest cause of workplace fatalities after motor vehicle accidents. In Maine, nearly 3,000 employees lose time from work each year from slip/trip/fall type injuries. Slips, trips, and falls whether on or off the job are expensive, disruptive and painful and may be tragic.

There are many situations that can cause slips, trips, and falls. Most slip, trip and fall injuries can be prevented by eliminating workplace hazards and by behavior modification: people taking the proper action to work safely.

What You Can Do To Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls

- Wear footwear that is appropriate for the conditions inside and outside. On smooth or wet surfaces wear slip resistant soles. Avoid wearing high heels. On snowy, icy, and rainy days wear boots to work and change after arriving.

- Clean footwear of mud, snow, etc. when entering a building.

- Be aware of changes in elevation and changes in walking surfaces. When moving from carpet to tile or dry tile to wet tile, etc. the friction (grip) between the sole of the shoe and the floor surface lessens. Alter your stride to take shorter, slower steps.

- Walk, don't run through work areas. When possible, stay on marked travel aisles and paths. Don't take "shortcuts" around machinery and equipment. Avoid areas that are cluttered or dimly lit.

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- When carrying a load make sure you can see over and around it. Scan the area ahead and plan your travel path. Get help to carry heavy or awkward objects. Use carts or other mechanical aids.

- Clean up, correct, remove, or report unsafe conditions such as spills, electric cords, frayed carpets, worn stairs and other hazards that could result in a slip/trip/fall injury. Warn others that a hazard exists by placing signs or cones or by isolation with caution tape or barricades.

- Do not allow equipment, tools, materials, or other obstacles to accumulate in aisles or walkways. Never store or place items on stairs.

- Keep desk and file cabinet drawers closed when not being used or when unattended.

- Always use a ladder or step stool. Never stand on a chair, desk, shelf, crate or box or any other unstable items to reach something. If you must routinely reach items in high locations, purchase a ladder or steps to allow it to be safely done.

- Walk erect using even strides and good balance. Always use handrails when available.

- Use "three-point positioning" when entering or exiting trucks, equipment, or construction vehicles. Always maintain three points of attachment; both hands and one foot or both feet and one hand. Enter *and* exit equipment facing it. Use all the steps, *never* jump.

- Maintain floors clean, free of water, oil or grease. Areas such as mechanics bays may be periodically steam cleaned. Tiled floors such as in kitchens or school cafeterias that have been worn or filled smooth can be etched to restore a rougher surface.

- Apply non-slip surfacing such as adhesive backed sheets, anti-slip paint, open-spaced grates or mats to ramps, docks, platforms, or stairways recognized as hazardous.

- Paint edges where elevation changes occur with "caution yellow" paint. Post signs to warn of dangerous areas.

- During winter months remove snow and ice and apply sand and salt *before* employees come to work and frequently thereafter. Note areas that drain poorly, retain snow, or are habitually slippery, and initiate permanent changes (engineer out) to eliminate the hazard.

- Conduct periodic inspections of the property and grounds to identify and correct slip, trip and fall hazards. Consider hazards to employees *and* possible liability exposures for the public. Review interior and exterior walkways, stairs, handrails, pavement conditions, parking areas, lighting and all other hazards mentioned in this Safety Short.

Be Pro-active! Get Involved!
Eliminate Slip, Trip and Fall Injuries!

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