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Don't Slip Up and Fall Down On the Job

One of bigger safety hazards we have to deal with is slips and falls. Falls always have an element of surprise. The surprise factor is what makes falls a standard comedy routine. But falls aren't at all fun when they are real. Falls are one of the leading causes of workplace injury and death. And these aren't necessarily falls from heights such as ladders or construction scaffolds. Most are falls from the same level, caused by slipping or tripping.

The main causes of slips, trips, and falls in the workplace are:

- ◆ Poor housekeeping: Scrap on floors, spilled liquids, equipment cluttering the aisles all of these scenarios can lead to someone slipping and falling if we simply ignore these hazards. You may think someone else will take care of it, but that may not happen in time to prevent an accident.
- ◆ Dangerous surface conditions: Broken or cracked surfaces, protruding nails, different elevations which are unmarked, torn carpets, loose or curled mats and slippery finishes are all hazards.
- ◆ Insufficient lighting: Dim or incorrect lighting, glare in areas where it is dangerous or lights which flicker or "strobe" and cause perception difficulties.
- ◆ Inattention to tasks: Carelessness brought on by inexperience, horseplay, fatigue or personal problems.
- ◆ Improper footwear: Shoes which are not properly fastened, are too big, too small, have slippery bottoms or oversized heels.

Here are some reminders about preventing falls:

- ◆ Keep obstructions out of walkways. These items are common causes of tripping accidents - stored materials, equipment, cables, cords, hoses, scrap, and trash.
- ◆ Keep doors and drawers of cabinets and workbenches closed.
- ◆ Keep all floors as clean as possible. Clean up any spills promptly. If this is not possible, make sure there is a barricade and sign. Place cleaning equipment in areas where everyone can find it.
- ◆ Floor coverings such as carpets, mats, and tiles should be secured to prevent tripping hazards. Report any problems you find.
- ◆ Stay under the speed limit when you are walking. Don't run in your work area.
- ◆ Make sure your footwear won't trip you up. It should fit well and have low heels. Keep your shoelaces tied. The tread should be adequate for travelling safely on slippery surfaces. Keep your shoes in good repair.
- ◆ Properly barricade any hazardous areas such as construction zones.
- ◆ If you are carrying an item, be sure you can see over it or around it. This is especially important on stairways.
- ◆ If you slip or trip - even if you are not injured - take a moment to figure out the cause. Correct or report any hazards such as wet floors or obstacles in traffic areas.

Falls aren't funny. They cause serious injuries and death. If you keep these fall prevention tips in mind, we will all be much safer. Watch your step to prevent falls.

