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PRESS RELEASE

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SLIPS, TRIPS, FALLS: REDUCE THE POTENTIAL

Simple safety habits can help keep you on your feet.

No matter where we work, the risk of slipping, tripping, and falling is present.

The second most common cause of injury at work are slips, trips, and falls. Shockingly, some 20% to 30% of people who experience a fall at work will suffer a moderate to severe injury such as deep bruising, a bone fracture, or a concussion.

It may be easy to overlook the hazards in your work area that could lead to this kind of injury. That's because they tend to pop up unexpectedly. Recognizing hazards that can lead to a slip, trip, or fall will help reduce potential them to occur.

Among the key steps to help protect against these types of injuries are appropriate footwear, signs posted near hazardous areas, and strict housekeeping principles. When necessary, utilize training and guidance as well as enforcement policies to help instill safe attitudes and compliance with guidelines for workers/employees.

When we walk, our center of gravity shifts from side-to-side as we transfer our weight. With every step, there is a brief moment when our body is off-balance. Encountering a slip or trip hazard at this moment can lead to a sudden fall if there isn't time to correct the balance.

There are two types of falls: same level falls and elevated falls. A same level fall occurs when a person falls to the floor or against an object or wall. An elevated fall happens when a person falls from above or below the floor, such as from a ladder, scaffold, building, or into a hole.

A slip occurs when there is too little traction between your foot and the surface that can cause a sudden loss of balance and potential fall. Slips occur on wet or oily surfaces, floors covered in fine dust or powder, or on ice or snow-packed areas.

Trips occur when your foot or leg comes in contact with a hazard while you're walking. The momentum from the upper body continues to move while the tripped leg remains stationary for a moment, causing your body to fall. Trips can also occur when a person steps up or down and the surface is uneven or not at the expected height.

The most effective way to protect yourself from these hazards is to prevent them whenever possible. Since slip and trip hazards often appear suddenly from incidents such as spills, loose cables, etc., everyone must remain vigilant to protect one another. The person in charge of a workplace is responsible for provide a safe workplace for everyone, so keep a watchful eye.

Proper footwear is of utmost importance to prevent slips and trips. Shoes such as sandals, open-toed shoes, canvas shoes, or high heels should not be worn in workplaces where slippery or uneven surfaces are common. Non-slip shoes or waterproof footwear can easily help workers safely navigate wet or slick surfaces.

In office environments, where some workers choose to wear heels or sneakers, footwear precautions still apply. Check the work area for

uneven surfaces or rugs that may snag a heel and be sure to encourage all workers to keep their shoes snugly tied.

Whenever a trip hazard or spill is present, signage is a great way to bring awareness to the hazard. Don't make the mistake of leaving spill signs up far after a hazard is resolved. Doing so – or storing it where it becomes part of the daily scenery – reduces its effectiveness when a spill event happens.

Seeing a hazard sign too frequently causes it to become visual noise in the work area. The best practice is to put the sign out only during the period of danger. Remove it as soon as the hazard is resolved.

Workplace spills and wet floors are some of the most common causes of slips. Whether the workplace is wet from an accident or freshly mopped, always put out a sign as soon as possible to navigate workers away from the wet surface. If there was a spill, it's crucial to clean it up as soon as possible.

In wet environments – such as kitchens – it's best practice to put down something to improve traction such as anti-skid tape or slip-resistant mats.

Keep walking paths clear by removing anything that could catch a foot or cause a loss of traction, since these pose potential slip or trip hazards. Common hazards include cables across walkways, paper on the floor, boxes, hoses, etc. All these items create potential for a dangerous accident. Items should never be left on the floor and those in charge of a work area should continuously check for hazardous clutter.

Frequent cleaning of all work areas is encouraged. Promote a culture of closing drawers, putting boxes away, hiding cables with protective covers (if they must extend into walking areas), etc.

Adequate lighting is essential when navigating uneven or wet surfaces. If a worker can't see dangers around them, it's unlikely they will be able

to avoid them. Adequate lighting should be present in all work areas and any area where workers walk, including stairs, halls, ramps, and exits.

Creating a culture of safety can help workers feel comfortable in pointing out a potential hazard. Safety orientation training or refresher courses should include reminders of the types of slip or trip hazards workers may encounter.

Fall hazards are present along unprotected sides or edges that are at least four feet above a lower level. Fall hazards are common in hoist areas, areas above dangerous equipment, repair pits, wall openings, stairways, scaffolds, etc.

Falls from fixed and portable ladders account for 20% of all fatal and lost work-day injuries in general industry. In general, ladders must be capable of supporting their maximum intended load, and mobile ladder stands and platforms must be capable of supporting four times their maximum intended load. Ladders should be inspected to identify defects that could lead to injury.

Keep these three points in mind to help avoid slips, trips, and falls:

- Slips happen when there is insecure footing resulting in loss of balance.
- Trips happen when there is a loss of balance resulting from contact with an object.
- Falls happen when there is a failed or missing support. Slips and trips can lead to falls which can happen on the same level or from one to another.