



Everyone Goes Home “SAFE”!

Accident Prevention: Slips, Trips & Falls

Slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents. Second only to motor vehicle accidents; slips, trips and falls are the most frequent accidents leading to personal injury. Slips, trips and falls can result in head injuries, back injuries, broken bones, cuts and lacerations, or sprained muscles. The Bureau of State Risk Management has identified "slips, trips and falls" as one of the top five causes of workers' compensation claims over the last six years.

A "**slip**" occurs when there is too little traction or friction between the shoe and walking surface.

A "**trip**" occurs when a person's foot contacts an object in their way or drops to a lower level unexpectedly, causing them to be thrown off-balance. A trip most often results in a person falling forward, while a slip most often results in the person falling backward. A "**fall**" occurs when you are too far off-balance.

There are many situations that may cause slips, trips and falls such as wet spots, grease, polished floors, loose flooring or carpeting, uneven walking surfaces, clutter, electrical cords, open desk drawers and filing cabinets. Loose, irregular surfaces such as gravel, shifting floor tiles, and uneven sidewalks, can make it difficult to maintain your footing. Most slip, trip and fall incidents are preventable with general precautions and safety measures.

Injuries from falls may be caused by a variety of sources. Many of these sources, like curbs, flaws in parking lots and uneven

surfaces, are not of significant height, but have the potential to cause significant injuries. The best way to prevent injuries such as these is to be aware of where you are going and pay attention to your walking surface.

Report even a minor fall. It could prevent someone from experiencing a more serious injury down the line.

Some of the Factors Contributing to Slips, Trips and Falls Include:

Changes in Elevation

Changes in elevation are a major source of trip accidents. Even a change in walking surface of $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ " or greater will be sufficient to cause a trip. Curbs, cracks in the sidewalk, ramps and single steps are all examples of these hazards.

Another type of working and walking surface fall is the "step and fall." This occurs when the front foot lands on a surface lower than expected, such as when unexpectedly stepping off a curb in the dark. A second type of step and fall occurs when one steps forward or down, and either the inside or outside of the foot lands on an object higher than the other side. The ankle turns, and one tends to fall forward and sideways. Changes in elevation may be unavoidable, but there are some simple ways to reduce accidents caused by these hazards:

- Watch for bumps, potholes, sidewalk cracks or changes in elevation
- If you identify a problem area in the refinery, report it to your supervisor



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Climbing or Descending Stairways

Nearly half of all falls occur on stairs. Keeping stairs in good repair is essential to preventing accidents. Make sure that stairways have secure handrails and guardrails, even surfaces, even tread heights and are free of deteriorating coverings.

To prevent an accident, awareness and prevention are the keys. Here are some simple ways to prevent a fall incident on stairways:

- Whether going up or down stairs, always use the handrail
- Make sure stairways are well lit
- Make sure stairways are clear of any obstacles
- Routinely check stairs for loose or worn carpeting/grating
- When carrying objects up and down steps, be sure you are able to see where you are stepping and hold onto the handrail if possible

The chance of fall accidents in stairways increases with inattention, illness, fatigue and haste. Take care when ascending and descending stairways.

Housekeeping Issues in Working and Walking Areas

Proper housekeeping in work and walking areas can contribute to safety and the prevention of falls. Not only is it important to maintain a safe working environment and walking surface, these areas must also be kept free of obstacles which can cause slips and trips. Obstacles could include clutter,

obstructions across hallways and material stacked or dumped in passageways, etc.

Avoid stringing cords or lines across hallways or in any walkway.

Regular frequent inspections of working and walking areas should be conducted to identify environmental and equipment hazards which could cause slips, trips and falls.