Walking and Working Surfaces



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Slips, trips and falls are responsible for the majority of general industry injury incidents. In addition, walking and working mishaps are responsible for 15 percent of all workplace deaths, and are second only to motor vehicle accidents as a cause of death.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

There are a number of ways that you can be injured from a fall at work. The most common is because of walkways and floors not being kept clean and free of wet spots, loose flooring, wires crossing the floors and open file cabinet drawers. Falls and slips can cause bruises or much worse – broken bones that can lead to lost work and lost wages. Some falls and injuries can be so severe that they lead to life threatening blood clots or even death.

EXAMPLE

One safety hazard associated with working and walking surfaces comes from not protecting openings in floors that lead to lower levels. The sides of an opening should be protected with rails on at least three sides, as a way to prevent someone from falling to the floor below. Such injuries can lead to long-term, career ending injuries. Death may also result from such a fall.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

You can protect yourself from injuries from slips, trips and falls. Before you begin work, check around to identify all the potential tripping and fall hazards. Check for extension cords or hoses that have been left lying around, floor openings, uneven floor surfaces, stairwells and skylights. Use handrails when going up and down stairs, and do not run or attempt to take more than one step at a time. Make sure you practice good housekeeping by cleaning floors of debris and grease. If surfaces are wet, dry them and if there are ice patches on outdoor walking surfaces, treat them and remove the ice.

FINAL WORD

Slips, trips and falls are a major source of injuries in the workplace. Injuries associated with walking surfaces are the second leading cause of death, behind motor vehicle crashes. You can play an active role in assuring that your workplace is a safe one and that walking surfaces remain free and clear of hazards that can lead to a lifetime of disability.