

# SafetyToolboxTalks

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## Stay Alert - Avoid Slips, Trips, and Falls

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#### Overview

Slips and falls occur every day. The extent of injuries and their recurrence can be minimized through proper safety knowledge and attitudes. Practice safety--don't learn it through experience. There are various ways to suffer slips and falls while working. You can slip and lose your balance, you can trip over objects left in your walkway, or you can simply fall from an elevated position above the ground.

#### Slips

Slips can be caused by wet surfaces, spills, or weather hazards like ice or snow. Slips are more likely to occur when you hurry or run, wear the wrong kind of shoes, or don't pay attention to where you're walking. To avoid slips, be on the lookout for foreign substances on the floors. Watch for deposits of water, food, grease, oil, sawdust, soap, or debris. Even small quantities are enough to make you fall. When entering a building from the outdoors or from debris areas, clean your footwear thoroughly. Snowy and rainy weather requires that you clean off the soles of your shoes. Don't go too fast, walk safely, and avoid changing directions too sharply.

#### Trips

Trips occur whenever your foot hits an object and you are moving with enough momentum to be thrown off balance. Trash, unused materials, any object left in the aisles or other areas designed for pedestrian traffic invites falls. Extension cords, tools, carts, and other items should be removed or properly barricaded off. Report any equipment or supplies that are left in walkways. Keep passageways clear of debris. Walk where you're supposed to walk. Short cuts through machine areas invite accidents. Concentrate on where you are going -- horseplay and inattention leaves you vulnerable to unsafe conditions.

#### Falls

The worst falls are from elevated positions like ladders and scaffolding. They result in serious injuries and death. Learn and practice ladder safety and the proper use of scaffolding. Hold on to handrails when using stairs or ramps. They are there to protect you should a fall occur. If you're carrying a heavy load which hampers your ability to properly ascend or descend stairs, use the elevator, or find help! When climbing, use a ladder of proper length that is in good condition. Keep it placed on a firm surface. Do not climb a ladder placed on machinery, crates, stock or boxes. Keep the ladder's base 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet of height. Don't over-reach. Always have control of your balance when working from a ladder. Never climb a ladder with your hands full, and always carry tools in proper carrying devices. When using a scaffold, be sure it is assembled according to the manufacturer's specifications. Check carefully for defects. Standing and working planks should be level and clean. Use toeboards to prevent tools from falling and workers from slipping. Work only with people who practice scaffold safety.