

The Ups and Downs of Ladder Safety

Every day, one person dies as the result of a ladder fall, and every year at least 65,000 people require emergency room treatment as a result of ladder falls. Using ladders improperly causes most of these accidents — so use ladders with caution:

Securing the ladder

- Check the ladder for damage and slip hazards (paint or oil on rungs). If the ladder is damaged, DON'T use it.
- Clean your shoes before climbing the ladder, so that you don't slip.
- Set up the ladder on a level surface and secure its anti-slip feet. Don't use ladders on ice or snow.
- Don't place ladders near electrical wires.
- Overlap sections of ladders by at least one quarter of their length when extending. If the ladder is overextended, it won't be secure.
- Lean the ladder against a secure structure, not against gutters, drainpipes or glass.

Safety on the ladder

- Always maintain three points of contact with the ladder (two feet/one hand or two hands/one foot).
- Never climb higher than four rungs from the top of the ladder, or you will not be able to balance properly.
- Keep both feet on the rungs, and center your waist between the stiles. Don't lean sideways.
- Allow only one person on the ladder at a time.
- Always face the ladder when ascending or descending.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Are You Heading For a Fall?

You may be thinking that a slip, trip or fall won't happen to you. But you could be at risk if one of the following factors applies to you — these factors account for 75 percent of falls.

Age. Hip fractures increase after age 50. The rate doubles every five years.

Activity level. A lack of weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, leads to decreased bone strength.

Gender. Women run the risk of osteoporosis (thinning of bones) after menopause and have two to three times as many hip fractures as men.

Habits. Smoking and excessive alcohol intake decrease bone strength.

Nutrition. A diet low in calcium and vitamin D can lead to thin bones and thus, falls and fractures later in life.

Herodity. Caucasians and Asian Americans with small, slight body structures are at higher risk. So are people with a family history of bone fractures.

Remember, at least a third of yearly falls are preventable. Check for hazards in your home and workplace, and always think "safety first."

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls



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How to Avoid the High Cost of Falling

Slips, trips and falls are second only to motor-vehicle accidents as a cause of death in the United States. More than a million people slip, trip or fall each year. The good news is, falls are easy to prevent. Take the time to watch for and correct hazardous conditions and lower your chance of injury.

Avoid Common Hazards

WEAR proper footwear. Wear snug-fitting, low-heeled shoes with nonskid soles.

AVOID childhood hazards. Don't use wheeled walkers and install child safety gates across stairs.

KNOW your medication. Read medication labels for side effects, and be extra careful if they list dizziness, drowsiness or loss of coordination.

HAVE your vision checked. Many falls are caused by poor vision. Have yours examined regularly, and wear your glasses or contact lenses.

BEGIN a regular exercise program. Staying in shape improves your balance and coordination and makes your bones and muscles stronger, lessening your chance of injury.



Preventing Falls On the Job

Falls account for 15-20 percent of all workers' compensation costs. Use these suggestions to make your workplace safe.

At the office:

- Make sure computer and telephone cords are not underfoot.
- If you need to reach something or change a light bulb, get help. Don't use your desk, a box, a wastebasket or an office chair as a footstool.
- Take your time. Many falls happen when people are walking fast or running.
- Tack or tape down loose carpet or flooring edges.
- Keep walkways free of clutter.
- Avoid wearing long skirts or pants that could trip you up and loose clothing that might get caught on things.

On the production floor or in the field:

- Mark walkways with yellow lines, and make sure these areas are kept clear of debris and clutter.
- Clean up spills as soon as they happen.
- Be sure work areas are well-lit. Moving from dark areas into light or vice-versa can cause a person to slip or trip.
- Don't have passengers ride on forklifts, tractors, mowers or other machinery.
- Don't carry more than you can handle. Loads that are too heavy or too big don't allow you to see properly.
- Whenever mounting or climbing up on a machine or vehicle, get a good handhold first. When getting out of a truck or off of a piece of machinery, always step down backward, never forward.
- Put nonskid surfaces on ramps, gangplanks and loading docks.

Remember RICE

Sprains and strains are the most common injury caused by slips, trips or falls. If you suffer a sprain or strain, use the RICE method.

R is for Rest: Stay off the sprained limb for at least a few days.

I is for Ice: Use ice for the first 24 hours to bring down swelling.

C is for Compression: Wrap the sprained limb in a bandage.

E is for Elevation: Lie down and raise the sprained limb above the level of your heart to reduce swelling.

FALL DANGER AT HOME

Night is prime time for household falls, as family members trip over kids' toys and other objects they can't see. A night light is a good solution. Some automatically switch on at sunset and off at dawn.

Clear the Path

Got a few minutes?

Clear it! Don't stack books, papers, equipment or any items in a designated walkway or exit. Keep file cabinet drawers closed so they don't block paths.

Cover it! Are there holes in the floor, sidewalk or other walking surface? Cover them or flag them in some way and notify building maintenance to get them repaired.

Clean it! Wipe up spills immediately and sweep up debris (such as sawdust) after finishing a project.

Tack it! Using tacks or tape, secure mats, rugs and carpets that don't lay flat. Also, tape down temporary electrical cords that cross a walkway.

Finally, if you notice loose floor grating, plates, tile or any other such hazard, report it to your supervisor or building maintenance at once.

ALWAYS think safety first!