



Safety on Walking/Working Surfaces

Overview of Walking/Working Hazards

Slips, trips and falls account for many accidents and accidental deaths on the worksite. These accidents are especially prevalent in the construction and contracting industry because as the site changes, safety hazards will evolve and change as well.

Paying close attention to the areas where we walk and work to eliminate the potential for slips, trips or falls is essential to the success of our business.

On the job, there can be many different types of slip, trip and fall hazards. For instance, material debris on the ground is just as hazardous as cords or hoses lying in walking areas. Also, materials stored improperly present spill hazards and can cause slips. The point is that there are many different types of hazards that can be in our work areas. **Being aware of these hazards and addressing them is the first step to avoiding slip, trip and fall injuries at the worksite.**

What other types of situations do we need to look out for? Here is a brief list of some of the common hazards seen frequently in working areas:

- Cords lying on the ground or other walking areas
- Water, oil, lubricants or other liquids spilled on the ground or on elevated areas at the site
- Materials (pallets, boxes, etc.) stored in a walking area
- Materials stored near ladders or in machine traffic areas
- Poor lighting in walking or working areas
- Poorly marked pedestrian or machine traffic only paths

Cords and Hoses

One of the biggest trip and electrical hazards comes from cords and hoses, and both are commonly used in working areas. First, cords and hoses should not be uncontrolled in walking areas because they pose trip hazards. Secondly, cords and hoses need to be monitored so they don't become damaged. Cords that have broken insulation pose electrical shock and fire hazards.

Use extra caution when working with extension cords. Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis. Temporary means only using the cord when you need additional power for a short period of time, such as when operating a power tool. Extension cords may not be used as a substitute for permanent wiring. Extension cords that are wrapped around poles or other equipment are not being used on a temporary basis and are likely being used as a substitute for permanent wiring. This use creates both trip and electrical hazards. Look in your work area and see where extension cords are in use. **Report any misuse to your supervisor immediately to prevent trip, fall and electrical hazards at the site.**

Material Storage in Working Areas

Look around your work area and consider how materials are stored. Look specifically at pallets, carts, trays and other material handling or material holding equipment to see if the way it is stored creates a hazard.



Pallets should not be stored on end because they are not stable in that position. They can easily tip over onto workers or equipment. Storing boxed materials properly will prevent slips, trips and falls. Always think about where material is stored and how it may create a trip hazard or ignite because of what it is stored by.

Stacking materials in work areas is unavoidable, but can also create hazards if materials are not stacked properly. It is important to not stack boxes of materials too high to avoid tip-over hazards. Also, heavier boxes should not be placed on top of lighter boxes for the same reason – even for short periods of time. Whatever materials are needed at your site, stacking them properly will help prevent tip or trip hazards.

Passageways and Other High-Traffic Areas

Aisles and passageways are used by both workers and motorized vehicles. Combining pedestrians with motorized vehicles can be dangerous when safety procedures are not followed. **When you are walking anywhere in the workplace, be mindful of where you are walking and what traffic is in the area.** Get in the habit of looking over your shoulder and looking both ways before crossing an intersection. If you are operating powered machinery, slow down at intersections and sound the horn when you approach blind areas. If powered industrial trucks are in your area and unattended, be careful about where you step so you don't trip over forks and other equipment that is on the ground.

Keeping Your Area Free From Hazards

Some of the most serious safety hazards found in walking or working areas are due to poor housekeeping. As you look at your work area, keep the following issues in mind.

- Sweep work areas so dust and debris do not accumulate and create a trip or slip hazard.
- Clean up spilled materials immediately.
- Don't let trash overflow in work areas.
- Don't store materials in passageways.
- Always be mindful of powered equipment operations. As a pedestrian, watch for traffic. As an operator, always be aware of workers and civilians in the area.
- Never store materials near ladders or machinery.

Summary

Walking and working surfaces can cause many different and serious injuries when safety precautions are not followed. The more we pay attention to the hazards in our work area, the better chance we have at preventing injuries and keeping ourselves safe and healthy on the job.