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Seven Ways to Avoid Slips, Trips, and Falls

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Slips happen when there's not enough friction or traction between your feet (shoes) and the surface you're walking or working on.

Trips happen when your foot or lower leg hits an object and your

upper body keeps on going, causing you to lose balance.

Falls happen when you slip, or trip and you're thrown too far off balance.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Falls are among the leading causes of death in the workplace and a fall at work can put you out of commission. Weeks in pain, months in a cast or years in a wheelchair can be the result of a simple slip, trip or fall. Even a fall from the same level – instead of a fall from a height – can cause a fatal or crippling injury.

The danger is amped up because slip, trip, and fall hazards are found in just about every work environment you can think of.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Here are 7 ways to stop slip, trip, and fall accidents:

1. Slow down

- Many falls occur when a person walks too fast through the work area.
- You're not in a race and there's no prize for getting to the breakroom first. Even if there was, it would be hard to eat those donuts your co-worker brought if you've got a broken jaw caused by a fall.

2. Watch out!

- Watch for clutter and spills and for unexpected changes in the floor level, such as a step up, floor drains, or potholes and grates in the parking garage.
- Watch for hazards such as loose floor tile, loose carpeting and broken stair surfaces. Report these defects immediately so they can be.
- Hallways, stairways, warehouse aisles and other traffic areas should be bright enough to see where you are going. If not, report issues to your supervisor.

3. Clothing *not* optional

- Wear well-fitting shoes with a low heel. Keep laces tied to prevent tripping.
- It's possible to trip over your own clothing. Baggy or flared pants are sometimes to blame.

4. Hands free

- Keep your hands free when you walk, to help you catch your balance if you start to.
- Don't walk with your hands in your pockets.
- Do put your phone in your pocket or leave it at your workstation so you won't be tempted to text or use it while

5. Move it

- Don't leave equipment, tools or materials on the floor.
- Don't block exits and aisles with materials or equipment.
- Don't leave items on stairs, even for just a moment.
- Don't run cords, cables or hoses across walkways.
- If you do have to carry something, make sure you can see over it or around.

6. Keep it shut

- Always close drawers, even if they are in an area where you wouldn't expect someone to trip over
- Cap and close bottles, cans, drums, and other containers to prevent their contents from spilling and creating a slip, trip, and fall

7. Stay alert

- Your chances for a tripping accident—or any accident—are greater if you are tired or distracted.

FINAL WORD

Slips, Trips, and Falls are a leading causes of workplace injury and death. They also cause a great deal of pain and suffering. Take slip, trip and fall hazards seriously, and don't let them trip you up.

OHS Due Diligence: Essentials of Taking Reasonable Care as a Manager/Supervisor

November 8, 2017 | This detailed seminar, delivered by a former OHS prosecutor, is intended to assist supervisors and managers in understanding their legal obligations and due diligence expectations. There will be practical commentary on and scenarios to illustrate due diligence challenges and best practices.

How You Can Prevent Violence in Your Workplace

Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Workplace violence can happen anywhere, any time. It can come from a co-worker or a stranger. And it isn't limited to physical assault. Workplace violence is any form of threatening or disruptive behavior. It can be as simple as a gesture, such as a raised fist, or as complicated as sabotage

What's the Danger?

Every year about two million workers in the US experience workplace violence. The situation is similar in Canada, where 17 percent of all self-reported incidents of violence, including

sexual assault, physical assault and robbery, occur in the workplace.

It seems almost weekly there is another horrific, headline marking story of a violent incident at a workplace. In addition to these newsmaking events, countless other violent incidents occur daily in the workplace. They may not make the headlines, but they are no less traumatic for the victims involved.

How to Protect Yourself

Before people explode in violence at work, they may give signals that something is wrong. Here are 10 warning signs that trouble might be brewing:

1. Social isolation
2. Decrease in personal hygiene
3. Complaints of unfair treatment
4. Excessive lateness or absenteeism
5. Faulty decision-making
6. Blaming others for mistakes
7. Inappropriate comments about revenge, violence or weapons
8. Disrespect for authority
9. Swearing
10. Overreacting to criticism

Here are 10 precautions workers can take to minimize or prevent violence on the job:

1. Don't get drawn into arguments.
2. Take verbal threats seriously, but don't respond to them.
3. Report all threats, incidents of bullying, and harassment to your supervisor or the company's security department.
4. Watch for unauthorized visitors, even those who appear to have legitimate business at your plant.
5. Don't give out information about fellow employees.
6. Keep doors locked before your business officially opens and after closing time.
7. Always have access to communication devices so you can notify someone for help.

8. Some workplaces have predetermined code words so one employee can tell another about a dangerous customer or visitor without tipping off the suspect.
9. Wear your identification badge as instructed, and never lend your key or entry card to anyone.
10. Trust your instincts. They act as your early warning system.

Final Word

Knowing the warning signs for potentially violent behavior and precautions and actions to take in response to threats and incidents, will go a long way toward ensuring your safety and to curbing violence in your workplace

Picking the Right Fire Extinguisher

Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Fire extinguishers are not a one type fits all piece of equipment. Different types of fire extinguishers are filled with different kinds of extinguishing agents designed to put out a specific type of fire or fires.

While operating a fire extinguisher is simple, in an emergency, even the simplest of tasks become difficult and if you accidentally choose the wrong type of extinguisher you put yourself and others in danger.

What's the Danger?

Using the wrong type of extinguisher to fight a fire can cause the fire to grow rapidly, cause an explosion, create a hazardous atmosphere, or lead to shock and electrocution.

A water extinguisher used on electrical or oil fires may cause electric shock or explosion.

A Type B or C carbon dioxide extinguisher used on a chemical fire may cause violent explosions

How to Protect Yourself

Choosing the correct type of fire extinguisher for the fire you are trying to put out is key.

Fires are classified by the type of fuel they use, in other words, what's burning.

1. Class A fires are wood, paper, cloth, trash, and other ordinary materials.
2. Class B fires are fueled by gasoline, oil, paint, and other flammable liquids.
3. Class C fires are started from an electrical source, they are commonly called electrical fires.
4. Class D fires occur when combustible metals burn.
5. Class K are commonly called kitchen fires because they start when vegetable or animal oils and fats burn.

Ask your supervisor if you are not sure what kind of fire extinguishers you have in your work area. The following list is a guide to the different classes of extinguishers and the types of fires they put out.

1. Class A Fire Extinguishers – put out paper, wood, rubber, cloth, and plastics fires.
2. Class B Fire Extinguishers – put out fires caused by flammable liquids including grease, oil, gasoline, and oil based paints.
3. Class C Fire Extinguishers – put out electrical fires from circuit breaker panels, energized equipment, computers, and other electrical equipment.

4. Class D Fire Extinguishers – should be used fires fueled by flammable metals.
5. Class K Fire Extinguishers – put out fires from vegetable oils, animal oils, and other fats used for cooking. Used in commercial kitchens and restaurants with deep fat fryers.

Multipurpose Extinguishers – Some fire extinguishers are marked A-B-C or “multipurpose.” These combination extinguishers may contain either a dry chemical or an inert gas and may be used on all three classes of fires.

Final Word

Learning the ABCD’s and K’s of fire extinguisher safety and knowing how to operate a fire extinguisher can help you protect yourself and others when a small fire breaks out.

The PASS-word to Fire Extinguisher Use

Safety Talk

What’s at Stake?

A fire is a frightening experience, but if you know how to operate a portable fire extinguisher and remember the PASS-word, you can fight back with confidence

What’s the Danger?

When a fire breaks out, you only have minutes to escape so seconds count. Fire can engulf your home, office, warehouse, or other structure, in as little as two minutes. In addition to having an

escape plan at home and an evacuation plan at work, knowing how to use a fire extinguisher can give you and others valuable seconds to escape.

How to Protect Yourself

First, always activate the building fire alarm to alert co-workers and customers first. Next, call the fire department or other emergency number. Only then try to fight the fire, and only if it is about the size of a wastepaper basket or smaller.

Here's your **PASS**-word to safety:

Pull the pin or remove the plastic locking strap.

- This action unlocks the lever and allows the extinguisher to be discharged.
- Be sure you have the correct type of extinguisher for the fire. For example, never use water on an electrical fire or you could risk an electrical shock.

Aim low at the base of the flames, not at the smoke.

- Keep the nozzle aimed low towards the base of the fire and stand a few feet back from the fire.

Squeeze the lever and the handle together to discharge the extinguisher.

- Release the lever when you want to stop discharging to check the state of the fire.

Sweep from side to side.

- Aim carefully as you only have about 10 to 20 seconds of extinguishing agent, depending on the size and type of extinguisher.
- Hit all sides of the fire and any stray spots.
- When the fire appears to be out, check for live embers.
- Watch for sudden flare-ups as the hot embers are exposed to the air.

Never attempt to fight a fire in an enclosed space such as a

storage room.

- Smoke and gases from the fire, along with the contents of the extinguisher, could displace the oxygen and cause you to lose consciousness.
- Your escape route could also be cut off by fire or smoke.
- Fight the fire while backing toward the exit. Always leave yourself an escape route.
- Never allow yourself to be trapped in a room with only one exit.
- If the extinguisher does not put the fire out, you will have to leave quickly and safely.

Never go back into a fire for anything or anyone. Alert firefighters of anyone who may still be in the building and let them do their job.

Final Word

By planning ahead and knowing how to operate a portable fire extinguisher, you will stay calm and react quickly in an emergency. Take firefighting seriously – it could be your PASS-port to safety.

Ergonomics and the Mature Worker

Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Older workers are dying on the job at a higher rate than workers

overall, even though the overall rate of workplace fatalities has been decreasing.

What's the Danger?

While many people are quite capable of working well into their 60s or longer, they are at greater risk for injury and job-related illnesses because of reduced strength, balance, hearing, vision, and slower reaction time.

How to Protect Yourself

Following these seven ergonomic based tips can help mature workers stay safe and be more comfortable on the job.

1. Arrange your workstation to minimize the distance you need to reach for equipment or materials.
 - The items you need to use most frequently should be centrally located.
 - Ensure your chair is at the correct height and properly adjusted to your workstation's height.
2. Shed some light on the situation.
 - Low lighting can lead to trips, slips and falls.
 - A middle-aged worker needs up to six times as much light to see, compared to someone in his or her 20's.
 - Bump up the type size at your computer to make reading documents easier. And ensure there is adequate lighting.
3. Reduce lifting demands on your body.
 - Use lifting devices such as carts whenever possible.
 - Lift with your legs instead of your back.
 - If you are repeatedly reaching into boxes, try to place them on benches or tables to reduce the need for bending.
4. Listen up.
 - If you have difficulty hearing what others are saying, have your hearing checked.
 - It's a good idea to let your supervisor know if you have

hearing loss or wear a hearing aid. This helps keep everyone safe and can also affect the type of hearing protection you wear.

5. Make a move.

- If your job involves long periods of sitting, get up and stand and stretch or take a short walk at least hourly.
- You'll be less stiff and you'll improve your body's blood flow.

6. Watch out!

- Take extra care when walking on slippery surfaces, particularly elevated slippery surfaces.

7. Work it out.

- Try to get regular exercise to keep your body limber and heart strong.
- If you haven't been exercising much and want to start, check with your doctor first to ensure you don't overdo it

Final Word

Mature workers bring invaluable knowledge and experience to their jobs. Following a few ergonomic work practices can keep these workers safe and productive so they can continue to share that knowledge and experience

Know the Risks of Asbestos Exposure

Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Although asbestos has been banned for many uses, because of its widespread use in the past, it remains present in older construction, fireproofing and insulation, and other products that contain asbestos. That's why you need to know something about asbestos, particularly if you work in construction, maintenance or demolition. Off-the-job renovation of houses, antiques or vehicles can also put you at risk.

What's the Danger?

When asbestos or asbestos-containing products break apart, they release tiny fibers that can be breathed in. These fibers lodge in the lung where they can cause diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma.

Asbestosis is a chronic respiratory condition. The inhaled fibers irritate the lung tissues and cause scarring. Symptoms include shortness of breath and a crackling sound in the lungs when inhaling. The disease is disabling and usually fatal. Workers who have renovated or demolished buildings containing asbestos may be at risk.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of death from asbestos exposure. Mining, milling, manufacturing, and the use of asbestos and asbestos containing products puts a worker at risk. Symptoms include a cough, change in breathing, and shortness of breath. Smoking in combination with asbestos exposure increases risk of lung cancer.

Lastly, mesothelioma is a rare form of cancer, usually occurring in the lining of the lungs, chest or abdomen. It is almost always linked to asbestos exposure. At risk are miners and textile workers.

How to Protect Yourself

The first step in protecting yourself is to understand where

asbestos can be found. Such as, floor tiles, fire doors, pipe and boiler wrap, cementing compounds used in plumbing, older shingles and siding, brake linings and clutch pedals.

The next step is to know what operations will cause asbestos fibers to break apart, crumble, or otherwise become airborne. This is when you are in danger of breathing the fibers in. Drilling, grinding, buffing, cutting, sawing, and striking, all have the potential to release asbestos fibers from asbestos-containing materials.

The final step in protecting yourself? If you suspect the presence of asbestos, report it immediately to your supervisor. Only a qualified, licensed contractor should identify, handle, remove, and dispose of asbestos containing material. Isolate the area in the meantime to prevent others from possible exposure.

Final Word

To protect yourself and others from asbestos exposure, you need to know where asbestos is likely to be found and understand what processes make it dangerous.

Stop Work-related Hearing Loss

What's at Stake?

If you work in a noisy setting and are not regularly using hearing protection, you're asking for hearing loss. And once your hearing is damaged and gone, you can't get it back.

What's the Danger?

Problems faced by workers who have diminished hearing include

difficulty hearing warning signals and alarms, trouble hearing directions, and an inability to determine where sounds are coming from (how close or far away they are).

Here's an example of how hearing loss can affect safety. A logging truck driver, known to have a hearing disability, was waiting for his truck to be loaded. He, and two other drivers were standing and waiting outside of their trucks at a warm-up fire.

The main cable used to move the logs snapped. The broken end whipped around the landing where the loading was taking place. The co-workers recognized the sound of the line breaking and took cover. But the truck driver apparently didn't hear the line break. It hit him in the face and threw him 50 feet. He died instantly.

How to Protect Yourself

The most effective way to protect workers' hearing is to reduce or remove hazardous noise from the workplace. This may be done by putting acoustic barriers around noisy processes, installing sound reducing mufflers on equipment, or by removing the source of the noise entirely.

When noise cannot be reduced to a safe level, your employer must provide hearing protection. It is your responsibility to wear it whenever you are in a hazardous noise situation. Some options include:

1. **Ear plugs.** These work by sealing the ear canal from the source of noise.
 - Ear plugs are easy to use, but must be inserted correctly to provide the best protection.
 - Some are designed for one-time only use and others are designed for repeated use.
 - Foam ear plugs are designed to be worn only once and thrown away after use.
 - Many plastic ear plugs are designed to be re-used.
2. **Canal caps.** These are a variation of ear plugs designed to

fit over the top of the ear canal.

- Some people prefer canal caps because they aren't inserted into the ear canal and are more comfortable.
- Canal caps don't provide as much protection as ear plugs, but are a good option when you must put on and take off hearing protection frequently.

3. **Ear muffs.** Ear muffs can last a long time if properly cared for and are generally easier to fit and wear.

- They work by sealing the entire ear with a cushioned cup.
- Ear muffs can also be worn over ear plugs to provide extra protection.

Final Word

Without proper hearing protection you put yourself at risk for hearing loss. Talk to your supervisor or safety person about finding the right hearing protection for you.

Trenching and Excavation: How to Avoid an Early Grave

Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Trenching and excavation work are among the most hazardous construction operations out there. On average, two workers are killed every month in trench collapses

What's the Danger?

Cave-ins, or collapses, pose the biggest risk to workers, as they are more likely than other excavation-related accidents to kill workers. Three reasons why a cave-in or collapse is dangerous:

1. They occur quickly and without warning.
2. The speed of the collapsing soil makes it almost impossible for anyone in its wake to escape.
3. Just one cubic yard of soil can weigh as much as a car. A trench collapse may contain three to five cubic yards of soil.

Even if you're only buried up to your waist or your head is out of the soil, your chance of survival is slim.

With each breath, the soil squeezes you tighter and presses down on your chest (with the weight of a car don't forget), making it harder, and then impossible to take another breath.

Other potential hazards include falls, falling loads, hazardous atmospheres, and being struck by mobile equipment.

How to Protect Yourself

Here are seven safety practices that can save your life.

1. Never enter an excavation that hasn't been sloped, shored, shielded, or otherwise offers protection.
 - Excavations in solid rock, and those less than five feet deep in the U.S. and 1.2 meters deep in most jurisdictions in Canada, are possible exceptions to this rule.
 - Always check with the safety person or competent person on site if you have concerns or questions.
2. Never enter an excavation until it has been inspected by a competent person.
3. Don't start digging until underground utilities have been identified.
4. Remember that spoil piles of soil, rock, equipment, and other materials must be at least 2 feet away from the edge of the excavation. In some cases, this distance may be greater, depending on safety regulations in your area.

5. Always wear your hardhat, high-visibility clothing, and other required PPE.
6. Keep an eye out for moving equipment and falling objects hazards.
7. Check that a ladder(s) or means of entry/exit is in place.
 - Check with your supervisor on the number and distance requirements for ladders.
 - Exit the area immediately if you have concerns for your safety.

Final Word

Don't let your work bury you. Practice excavation safety practices every single time you enter any type of excavation.