



Slips, Trips & Falls

Arkansas Workers' Compensation Commission/
Health and Safety Division

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Not long ago in a central Arkansas industrial plant, a janitorial helper was scrubbing the steps and floors with water and a cleaning agent. An observant co-worker realized that soon dozens of people would be going down those steps to their coffee break. This person then took the proper action to warn others and avert this potentially dangerous situation.

An unguarded wet floor is only one of the many contributing factors that account for 1 in 8 workers' compensation cases due to slips and falls. Injuries that are sustained from slipping and/or falling on the job take a heavy toll in medical suffering. Besides the pain, suffering, and expenses, each injury from a fall is potentially life threatening. It is important to spot unsafe conditions which may lead to slips and falls and prevent them.

There are various ways to experience slips and/or falls while working. You can slip and lose your balance; you can trip over an object left in a walkway; or you can fall from an elevated position such as a ladder or stairs.

To avoid slips and falls, be on the lookout for foreign objects or substances on the floor. Watch for deposits of water, food, grease, oil, or debris. Even a small amount or object can be enough to make you fall.

When entering a building from the outdoors, thoroughly clean the soles of your footwear. Rainy or snowy weather requires a door mat at each entrance to permit you to remove moisture or debris that may be clinging to your shoes. Don't walk too fast, or take long strides when stepping from the door mat onto the floor. The soles of your shoes may still be damp enough to cause you to slip. Walk with caution, and avoid changing direction too sharply.

Be aware of tripping hazards; trash, unused materials, electrical cords, any object left in an aisle or other designated pedestrian traffic path. If maintenance work necessitates leaving equipment or materials in a walkway, make sure the area has warning signs or is barricaded to alert pedestrians.

If you find equipment or material left in a walkway, report it. If it's maintenance equipment and supplies, let the proper personnel remove it. Help keep passageways clear of trash or trip hazards. If you toss something at a trash container, and miss it, or if someone else has left something lying on the floor, by all means **Pick It Up**.

Walk in designated aisle ways. Short cuts through other's work areas invite accidents. Concentrate on where you are going – inattention leaves you vulnerable to unsafe conditions.

Hold on to handrails when using stairs. They are there to protect you should you slip. If you're carrying a bulky or heavy load which hampers your ability to climb stairs safely, use the elevator or get help!

The worst falls are from elevated positions like ladders or scaffolding. They can result in serious injury or death. Learn and practice ladder safety and the proper use of scaffolding.

Ladders must be the proper length, and should extend at least three rungs above the highest point. Position the ladder at the proper angle for climbing -- one foot away from the wall for every four feet of height. When climbing or descending, place both hands on the side rails. Never climb a ladder with your hands full. Climb to the desired height and then hoist any tools or materials up with a rope.

Once you're at the desired working height, don't over-reach. Keep your body and legs within the lines of the ladder side rails. Extend only your arms.

When using a scaffold, be sure it has been assembled according to the manufacturer's specifications. Check carefully for defects. Planking must be level and clean. Use toe boards to prevent tools from falling and workers from slipping. Work only with people who practice scaffold safety.

Slips and falls occur every day. Their occurrence and the extent of injuries can be eliminated or minimized through a knowledge and application of safe work practices. Lessons learned the hard way may have a permanent effect -- serious injury or death.

Don't learn your lessons the hard way; practice safety.