



FALL PREVENTION ALLIANCE TOOLBOX TALK ON SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS: IDENTIFYING THE SOURCE

Company: _____ Job Site Location: _____

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____ Foreman/Supervisor: _____

Falling is one of the leading causes of injury accidents in the workplace. The three physical factors involved in slips, trips, and falls are friction, momentum, and gravity. Friction is the resistance between two objects that creates traction between a shoe or boot and a walking/working surface. Momentum is the effect on an object in motion caused by speed and weight. Gravity is the force that pulls you to the ground in a fall.

Slips — are caused by the loss of balance resulting from too little friction between your feet and the surface you are walking or working on. Slips result from the loss of traction due to smooth surfaces, spilled liquids or lubricants, ice and snow, or other debris. Slips are more likely to happen if you are in a hurry or run, wear the wrong type of foot-gear for a particular workplace, or not watching where you are going.

Slips can be avoided by following these safety precautions:

- Practice safe walking skills. Take short steps to keep your center of balance under you and point your feet slightly outward.
- Clean up spills right away or report them to the appropriate personnel. Even minor spills can be hazardous.
- Do not allow lubricants or residue to accumulate on jobsite walking/working surfaces.
- Be extra cautious on smooth surfaces such as new floors, decking, or surfaces that are wet.

Trips — occur when your foot hits an object and you are moving with enough momentum to be thrown off balance. Trips are more likely to happen when the work-zone is cluttered and you are in a hurry and do not pay attention to where you are going.

To help avoid trips, remember these rules:

- Make sure you can see where you are going. Carry only loads that you can see over.
- Keep work areas well lit. Use a flashlight or extension light to make the walking area visible in dark areas.
- Use good housekeeping practices and utilize the designated disposal areas. Store material and tools in cabinets or assigned storage areas.
- Arrange equipment so that it doesn't interfere with walkways or pedestrian traffic in your area.
- Tangled extension cords or air hoses can be dangerous tripping hazards. Work areas must be kept clear of clutter and debris.
- Eliminate "loose footing" hazards on stairs, steps, and floors.

Falls — occur whenever a person is too far away from his or her center of balance. Slips and trips often push workers off their center of balance far enough to cause a fall, but there are many other ways to fall. Many falls are caused by misuse of ladders, use of makeshift ladders, improper ladder climbing techniques, and improper scaffolding use. Falls from heights pose the risk of serious injury.

Avoid falls of any kind by following these common sense safety measures:

- Make sure hallways, stairs, and work areas are properly lit.
- Report or repair stairs or handrails that are loose or broken.
- Never use stairs or aisles as storage areas.
- Wear shoes or boots appropriate for the job with high-traction non-skid soles.

Stairs — are another area that presents a risk of falls for workers. Loss of traction causes many stairway slip and fall accidents, usually due to water, ice, or some other liquid on the steps. Because stairs are frequently not completed on the jobsite, special attention must be paid to safety. Workers can prevent injury on stairs by:

- Keep stairwells clear of clutter and obstructions.
- Using handrails whenever possible.
- Only carrying loads that they can see over.
- Report unsafe conditions promptly, including broken stair treads, floorboards, or handrails.

Through the OSHA and Houston Fall Prevention Alliance, this Toolbox Talk was developed for informational purposes only. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. July 2016.

The Houston Fall Prevention Alliance was formed by the below organizations to provide their members, and others, with information, guidance and access to training resources that will help them protect the health and safety of workers, particularly by reducing and preventing exposure to fall hazards in the construction industries and addressing fall related issues and understand the rights of workers and the responsibilities of employers under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act). In developing this alliance, these organizations recognize that OSHA's State Plan and On-site Consultation Project partners are an integral part of the OSHA national effort.





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Ladders — The following safety tips will help make working with ladders a safer operation:

- Do not use makeshift ladders.
- Inspect the ladder before use.
- Never use a ladder that has broken or missing rungs or other defects.
- Open an A-frame ladder completely prior to use.
- If you are not the one using the ladder, stay back from it to avoid falling objects and the chance of unbalancing the ladder.

Conclusion: Eliminating the hazards associated with slips, trips, and falls in the workplace requires the cooperation and participation of all involved personnel. OSHA has installed a multitude of regulations in an attempt to control the sources of many slips, trips, and falls (such as construction and maintenance of ladders, scaffolds, and walkways). A number of other requirements include reporting hazards, good housekeeping in work areas, spill cleanup, personal protective equipment, and fall protection (including ladder and climbing issues). Follow these guidelines to help control the causes of slips, trips, and falls.

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