

Preventing Slips and Falls

A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

If you have the statistics for slips and falls for your particular institution, you may want to discuss them with employees during this safety talk.

Let's examine the 1979 Division of Safety and Hygiene statistics to see just what types of accidents occurred last year in Ohio's hospitals and nursing homes.

Looking at the hospital statistics, we can see that about 46 percent of the accidents that resulted in claims being filed with The Industrial Commission of Ohio were slips or overexertion.

Approximately 19 percent of the accidents and injuries were same-level falls--a same level fall is not falling off a ladder or other height.

The number of same-level falls was even a little higher in nursing homes. We must remember that these numbers tell us only about the claims filed with The Industrial Commission of Ohio. Additional accidents and injuries have undoubtedly taken place. Statistics for past years were similar.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

At this time discuss the statistics of your institution, if available.

Slips and overexertion are the leading causes of accidents and injuries that result in compensation claims in Ohio's health care facilities, with falls ranking next. That is why we need to spend some time today discussing slips and falls and what can be done to prevent them. Perhaps the best way to prevent slips and falls is -- you guessed it-- good housekeeping in every work area.

Rooms, work areas, hallways and especially steps should be kept free of equipment and other objects that block traffic or present tripping hazards. When not in use, tools and other equipment should be kept in proper storage places. Remember there's a place for everything and everything has its place.

A spill should be cleaned up immediately to eliminate the danger. In addition to good housekeeping, there are some other employee practices that can help prevent slips and falls:

- If you notice tripping hazards, such as bulges in carpeting, loose floor boards or raised edges, report these to the supervisor so repairs can be made.
- Place electrical cords and/or telephone cables so that they do not lie in heavily traveled areas. If they must lie in heavily traveled areas, anchor them with electrical tape.
- Housekeepers should mop only half of a hallway at once, leaving the other half open for passage. They should take time to post "Wet Floor" signs. You and others should respect the signs.
- Walk through hallways and on stairways.
- Use handrails when traveling on stairs.
- Do not climb on storeroom shelving. If you must reach high shelves, never substitute crates, boxes or other objects for ladders.
- Make sure stepladders are equipped with safety feet and are in excellent condition.
- Wear proper footwear on the job at all times.

The safety rules for preventing slips and falls really are just "common sense" rules, which you have probably heard dozens of times before. Nevertheless, a look at the statistics tells us that they need to be repeated until we do our part to prevent those disastrous slips and falls, which are costing people time and money and a lot of pain as well. Let's concentrate on safety today and every day to prevent slips and falls!