



INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE EMPLOYEE SAFETY

Subject: Slips and Falls

Injuries from falls rank second nationally as major accident event and in some school districts, it is the primary accident-injury cause. How does this happen? There are several reasons: poor walking/working surfaces, footwear not appropriate for the work environment, use of equipment not designed for specific tasks – such as using chairs as ladders, and obstructions (stored material, cords, furniture, etc.) in the walkways. All these situations can be managed and the chance these kinds of accidents greatly reduced.

First place to start in your workplace assessment. Are your walking and working surfaces in good condition? If carpets, no tears or bunching? Cords and cables kept out of the walkway? Are obstructions removed, allowing a clear path for pedestrians? Are you using the correct floor finish on your tile/terrazzo floor – we found maintenance staff using acrylic compounds on tile that actually *reduced the slip resistance* when the floor was wet! Or, over-finishes the floor to improve the shine only to lower slip resistance factor below ANSI minimum 0.50. Do you use runners in your foyers during adverse weather to help collect dirt, water, salt from footwear? Do you check condition of stairways (treads and railings), parking areas (for potholes), sidewalks (expansion cracks or heaving), ladders and other equipment people use to work at elevation?

Next, footwear. This one can be a tough area to explore because it gets a little personal. Well, so does slipping and falling when the subject person gets injured. There is a variety of footwear designed for specific conditions –

boots for wet weather, athletic shoes for sports, flops for beach, and high heels for evening wear. There is also activity-appropriate foot wear for work environment. You should not mix, say, evening shoes for working in foodservice kitchen, or athletic shoes for working around chemicals. If you do, it not only increases chance you will have a slip/fall accident, but you could have other problems (certain chemicals will disintegrate leather footwear). Also, footwear does wear out. You need the right kind of footwear for job demands (non-slip shoes for commercial kitchens, work boots for maintenance staff) and it needs to be in good condition to perform as intended.

And, finally, work habits. Do people carry items in their arms so their view is obstructed? Do they take big strides when the floor is wet or the sidewalk icy? I am amazed how many people don't know that ice is slippery and continue to navigate the same way they would on dry pavement. They need to take smaller steps and sloooow down – no rush. And, teachers using chairs (as ladders) to reach high locations on walls or ceilings. A chair was only designed for one thing – to sit on it. Ladders need to be designed for work task – commercial for light duty and industrial for heavier demands. You are not permitted to have or use Type III-Residential Grade ladder anywhere in your school building.

Be safe. Think about what you are doing. Take the time to do it right.