



Walking is Working

Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls



5 Minute Safety Talk

While each of our jobs are different, for most of us, walking is part of our workday. Whether it's walking the factory floor, taking a stroll outside during a break or getting from one meeting to another, we are on our feet at least part of the day. With all of that foot traffic, there is always the potential for a fall.

According to *Injury Facts*®, falls to the same level are a leading cause of preventable workplace injuries causing time away from work. While walking seems like a simple task, it's been a leading cause of workplace injury for many years. We need to watch out for all of the hazards tied to walking just as we would any other part of our jobs that poses a safety risk.

So what are some of the dangers tied to walking? They include distraction, footwear, poor walking surfaces, damaged surfaces and basic housekeeping.

The many faces of distracted walking

The same way cell phones and other portable electronics can distract us behind the wheel, these devices can also distract us as we walk. Many of us have probably seen the viral videos of people running into walls, falling into mall fountains or tripping over potholes while using phones and wondered how this could ever happen, but distraction can take many forms. It could include:

- **Reading a text, memo or any kind of written material while walking.** If you need to read something on the go, step to the side with your back to a wall before you start to move again.
- **Having an intense conversation, either on the phone or with another person next to you.** Even wearing headphones can be distracting. Always stay vigilant and watch where you are going. You need to be able to see changes in elevation, cracks or holes in flooring, and other hazards.
- **Rushing too fast, especially in high traffic areas and around corners.** Slow down and anticipate that other people might come into your path.
- **Carrying too much in your hands.** Don't let packages or boxes impede your view. It's good to have your hands free to help brace yourself should you start to slip or fall. Plus, you should always have one hand on the handrail when on the stairs.

Dress for your day

When it comes to choosing the proper footwear to prevent falls, your choice may change based on a few different factors.

- **Where are you going?** Always strive to have the safest footwear for your work environment, whether that's steel toed boots or comfortable shoes with good grip. If you frequently change environments, walking inside and outside or from an office to a shop floor, plan ahead so you have the footwear you need.
- **What is the weather like?** On a snowy or rainy day, boots are the best option to get you safely from the parking lot to inside. If needed, consider bringing an alternate pair of shoes to wear during the day. If you work outside, make sure your footwear is sturdy enough to handle all potential environments and terrains you will encounter.

Remember that you always need to be ready to evacuate a worksite quickly should an emergency situation arise and your footwear can play a role in how fast that can be done.

Keep your space tidy

Sometimes just a little housekeeping can help prevent falls.

- **Keep papers and boxes off the floor and out of walkways**
- **Make sure drawers are always kept closed so no one can run into them**
- **Keep cords properly covered and out of walkways**
- **Ensure proper lighting – if a bulb goes out, be sure to have it changed**
- **Clean up any spills immediately**
- **Never stand on a chair to reach for something high – get a ladder or step stool**
- **Attend to damaged floor surfaces, carpets.**

Fall-proof your home

When it comes to falls, the choices you make are important, both at work and home. As a pedestrian, pay special attention on sidewalks and in busy public areas – never assume others are watching out for you. Help the older adults in your life fall-proof their homes, especially their bathrooms, to prevent injury. With a little preparation, we can reduce falls wherever we are. It's part of our job.



Proud Member