

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

January 2020

Don't slip up on slip hazards

Recently, a new janitorial helper at an industrial plant started scrubbing some stairs and the nearby floor with water and a cleaning agent and then took a break. An observant passing worker realized that soon dozens of workers would hurry down those steps on their way to their coffee break. The worker quickly placed a "wet floor" caution sign where the janitor was working and averted potentially disastrous falls and injuries.

Few things happen faster than slips and falls. During a slip, our reflexes come into play and try to protect us. Often, this quick muscular reaction can cause strains or sprains and, in some cases, body tension, which may result in a fall with a more serious injury.

Stay alert to objects and conditions that cause falls, and take action to prevent injuries:

- Be on the lookout for foreign substances on the floor, and remove them if it's safe for you to do so.
- Watch for deposits of water, food, grease, oil, sawdust, soap, or debris, and ensure they are removed. Even small quantities of these substances, sometimes almost too small to see, can be dangerous.
- When you go into the workplace from outdoors in rainy or snowy weather, wipe your shoes thoroughly on the doormat—not just to keep the floor clean but also to prevent you or others from slipping or falling.
- Immediately report a slip hazard or condition to your supervisor.



"So, some examples of at-risk behavior are... Jeff, could you keep the sword out of your mouth during my presentation?"

Signs of complacency

Many workplaces have invested heavily in safe work practices and created conditions where workers feel safe, yet the risk of injury is still high due to a poorly recognized factor: complacency. Even for workers who are well trained in safe work practices, it's easy to get too comfortable with job risks and get distracted from the task at hand. Because you feel safe or believe your safe work practices are ingrained or automatic, you may relax your guard.

Studies show that a brief distraction or loss of focus—just 3 seconds—doubles the likelihood that workers will commit an error. When they return their attention to the task, they may do the next task incorrectly or out of sequence. Even slightly longer distractions—4 to 5 seconds—triple the chances of an error. For highly hazardous tasks, errors can be very costly in terms of both life and property.

Watch for indicators that you or coworkers are distracted. There are 3 types of at-risk behaviors to watch for: deliberate, unintentional, and habitual. Deliberate is the easiest to spot, such as taking a shortcut through a known restricted or high-hazard area. Unintentional behavior is inadvertently walking into a restricted area while preoccupied or otherwise distracted. An indicator of at-risk behavior or distraction due to habit is boredom, or when a worker stops thinking a high-hazard task is hazardous after he or she has done it safely many times.

Recognize the signs

- Are you or coworkers stopping in the middle of tasks to check a cell phone? Do you or other workers interrupt one another while performing high-risk activities?
- Look for increases in the kinds of minor, first-aid-only injuries that might indicate inattention or distraction—minor cuts, scrapes, burns, and bumps. Also look for increases in noninjury indicators of complacency such as problems with product quality or lack of attention to work area cleanliness.
- Watch for at-risk behaviors, such as taking shortcuts through restricted areas, keeping food in areas with hazardous chemicals, or failing to tightly close lids on containers of flammable liquids.

Take action to stay alert

If you see signs of complacency in yourself or your coworkers, take action. Consider the following activities to keep you free of complacency:

- Join your workplace safety committee. Offer ideas to develop or improve safe work practices, productivity, or workflows.
- Take any opportunity to cross-train or learn new skills, which will make you a more valuable employee and help to keep you engaged.
- Mentor new workers.
- Help conduct hazard assessments, and develop solutions to identified hazards or problems.

Complacency is a safety hazard that can compromise a workplace that seems like it's working safely. If you've relaxed your guard, or you see coworkers relax their guard, ask what you can do to bring minds back to the task at hand.

Wearable safety monitoring technology advancing

Even workplaces with the best safety training, engineering controls, and personal protective equipment experience injuries. For example, there are inherent risks to workers performing tasks around mobile equipment like forklifts, cranes, earthmoving equipment, and motor vehicles. Workers being struck by mobile equipment is a common incident that leads to debilitating injuries and death.

There are now wearable monitoring technologies that can alert workers to an imminent hazard. The technologies are already available in consumer wearables, usually connected to smartphones or mobile devices; and they are used to improve health and well-being by aiding in personal fitness; and the technology continues to develop.

Wearable vests and hard hats, as well as mobile equipment, can be outfitted with an antenna and an audible signal or a visual prompt that alerts both the worker and the mobile equipment operator that the worker is in the danger zone too close to the vehicle. For example, a prototype belt with vibrating motors alerted participants to the presence of vehicles and equipment in research performed by The Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR). However, there are concerns that wearable devices could be used for productivity monitoring or for tracking an employee's location, hours worked, breaks, or even number of steps taken during a workday.

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complacency
wearable
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slip
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sprain

Team Lifting: Quiz

1. The first thing to do when performing a team lift is to:
 - A. Squat down close to the load and get a firm grip.
 - B. Plan the lift.
 - C. Clear a pathway.
2. The only time a team lift is necessary is when a load is too heavy for one person. TRUE or FALSE.
3. Select the team lift action that is NOT a safe work practice.
 - A. Move slowly without sudden starts or stops.
 - B. Keep the load level and weight evenly distributed.
 - C. Change your grip while holding a load.
4. Lift slowly with your back muscles. TRUE or FALSE.
5. Carry long loads on the same left or right shoulder of each team member. TRUE or FALSE.

ANSWERS

1. **B.** Plan the lift. 2. **FALSE.** A team lift may be necessary to move items that are heavy, large, awkward in shape, or uneven in weight. 3. **C.** Changing your grip while holding the load is not a safe work practice. 4. **FALSE.** Keep your back straight, and lift slowly using leg power. 5. **TRUE.**

Team lifting safe work practices

There are times when items that are heavy, large, awkward in shape, or uneven in weight need two or more people to lift. If you don't do that in an organized fashion, a helping hand could become a hurting hand.

What you should do :

- First, plan the lift so each worker understands what to do before you begin. Be sure the pathway from the beginning to the end of the lift operation is clear.
- One person will lead and give orders to lift, turn, and set down so that everyone can move together.
- Squat down close to the load, get a firm grip, keep your back straight, and lift slowly using leg power; for setting down, reverse the procedure.
- Move slowly without sudden starts or stops.
- Avoid stairs whenever possible, and use an elevator or a hoist to move loads to different floor levels.
- Keep the load level and the weight evenly distributed.
- Carry long loads on the same left or right shoulder of each team member, and if the object is rigid, walk in step. Walk out of step with each other with long, flexible items to keep them from bouncing.

What you should not do:

- Walk backward without someone to guide you.
- Twist your body when lifting or carrying.
- Lift from one knee.
- Change your grip while holding a load.
- Step over objects when you are moving.

When you use teamwork, you'll find the lifting and moving much easier and safer.