



Slips, Trips, and Falls

Authors

John Shutske, University of Minnesota
Michele Schermann, University of Minnesota

Reviewers

Liz Wagstrom, National Pork Board
Kerry Leedom-Larson, National Pork Board

Introduction

Slips, trips, and falls cause the majority of general industry accidents. They cause 15% of all accidental deaths, and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities. Slips trips and falls can result in head injuries, back injuries, broken bones, cuts and lacerations, or sprained muscles.

A substantial number of farm workplace injuries – even some fatalities – have resulted from a “simple” fall. As a manager or owner, it’s your responsibility to eliminate slip and trip hazards to the greatest extent possible.

It’s your employees’ responsibility to adopt habits that will reduce their chances of being injured in a fall. Make sure they get the training and reinforcement they need to make a habit of working safe.

OSHA CFR 1910.22

The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to comply with hazard-specific safety and health standards. According to Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, often referred to as the General Duty Clause, employers must provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

OSHA has previously used the General Duty Clause to cite employers for employee exposure to potential serious physical harm related to: cluttered walkway surfaces with limited egress in case of fire; failed inspection and repair of fixed ladders attached to feed bins to prevent fall hazards; and exposing workers to falling into manure lagoons during night vehicle off loading operations.

Walking/working surfaces are addressed in specific OSHA standards 1910.22 and Fixed Ladders are addressed in 1910.27 for the general industry, shipyard employment, marine terminals, and longshoring. The OSHA standards 1910.22 and .27 apply to all permanent places of employment, EXCEPT where only domestic, mining, or agricultural work is performed. The General Duty Clause has been used to cite agricultural and pork production employers for walking surfaces and fixed ladders violations. The pork producer should be familiar with these standards and apply them to their operation for the safety of their employees.

Hazard

There are many situations that can cause slips, trips, and falls, such as: ice, wet spots, grease, polished floors, loose flooring, uneven walking surfaces, clutter, electrical cords, and damaged and/or loose ladders. The controls needed to prevent these hazards are usually obvious, but too often ignored. They include keeping walkways and stairs clear of scrap and debris; coiling up extension cords, lines, and hoses when not in use; keeping electrical and other wires out of the way; wearing lug soles in icy weather; clearing parking lots, stairs, and walkways in snowy weather; and using salt/sand as needed.

Prevention and Control

- The employer shall eliminate, to the extent possible, conditions causing slippery working and walking surfaces immediate work areas used by employees.
- Clear debris and make sure that alleyways, stairs, and exits are not blocked.
- Make sure floor areas that cannot be cleaned continuously, like entranceways, have anti-slip surfaces.
- Replace any worn, ripped or damaged flooring that poses a tripping hazard.
- Ensure that all exits are clearly marked and well-lit.
- Cover cables that cross walkways.
- Make sure all trap doors and railings are sturdy and in good repair.
- Provide adequate lighting for facilities and trailers – inside and out.
- See that work areas are clean and orderly, and that spills are cleaned up promptly.
- Make barn lime available in “slippery zones” (areas prone to being slippery with water, urine, or manure), so your employees can spread it as needed to increase traction.
- Make slip-resistant footwear mandatory for all employees.
- Replace ladders that have cracks, dents, and missing rungs.
- Develop and implement written procedures requiring that prompt corrective action is taken any time a damaged ladder is identified.
- Develop and implement a program and procedures to ensure that employees report damage as it occurs and take action to ensure that the ladders are not abused or neglected.
- Make sure all employees receive training on the proper methods for safely using ladders.
- Make sure that all ladders are promptly repaired when they are identified as damaged or defective.
- Conduct regular inspections of your facility/buildings to look for slip, trip, and fall hazards.
- Provide illumination for dangerous areas.
- Investigate all trips, slips, and falls of your employees, even if there was no injury.

Summary

Take precautions to prevent falls due to slips and trips.

Do:

- Keep aisles, walkways, and stairs free of clutter.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Wear slip-resistant footwear.
- Think about actions before you take them.

Don't:

- Use aisles and stairways as storage areas.
- Allow materials to build up on floors.
- Leave oil slicks uncovered.
- Leave tools out when you finish using them.

Additional Resources

Small Business Handbook. OSHA Publication 2209-02R, pdf (2005). (<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh2209.pdf>)

Walking-Working Surfaces. OSHA's Outreach Training Program. Assists trainers conducting OSHA 10-hour General Industry outreach training for workers. Since workers are the target audience, the material emphasizes hazard identification, avoidance, and control — not standards. No attempt has been made to treat the topic exhaustively

The following links will provide further detail for employee protection around openings in floors, ladders, stairs, and scaffolding.

1910 Subpart D - Walking-Working Surfaces

1910.21 - Definitions (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9713)

1910.22 - General requirements (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9714)

1910.23 - Guarding floor and wall openings and holes (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9715)

1910.24 - Fixed industrial stairs (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9716)

1910.25 - Portable wood ladders (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9717)

1910.26 - Portable metal ladders (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9718)

1910.27 - Fixed ladders (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9719)

1910.28 - Safety requirements for scaffolding (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9720)

1910.29 - Manually propelled mobile ladder stands and scaffolds (towers) (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9721)

1910.30 - Other working surfaces (www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9722)

Reference to products in this publication is not intended to be an endorsement to the exclusion of others which may be similar. Persons using such products assume responsibility for their use in accordance with current directions of the manufacturer. The information represented herein is believed to be accurate but is in no way guaranteed. The authors, reviewers, and publishers assume no liability in connection with any use for the products discussed and make no warranty, expressed or implied, in that respect, nor can it be assumed that all safety measures are indicated herein or that additional measures may be required. The user therefore, must assume full responsibility, both as to persons and as to property, for the use of these materials including any which might be covered by patent.
This material may be available in alternative formats.