

eplica ▶▶ Safety Lines

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OSHA says STF injuries account for the majority of general industry accidents. They cause back injuries, sprains and strains, contusions, and fractures—and they result in 15 percent of all accidental deaths. Read what you can do to ensure that you're doing all you should to keep your people on their feet.

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Does Your Flooring Prevent or Cause Falls?



Across industries and across the years, slips, trips, and falls (STFs) continue to be among the leading causes of workplace injury. Same-level falls are debilitating, expensive, and, most important, largely preventable.

The opportunities for workplace STFs are too numerous to mention. Slippery walking and working surfaces, leaks, debris left in walkways, uneven floors, protruding nails, bunched floor mats, and uneven step risers are among dozens of dangers.

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Take the Right Steps

To ensure that you're doing all you should to keep your people on their feet, take these and other steps:

- ▶▶ If you have wet or oily processes, maintain drainage and provide false floors, platforms, nonsolid mats, or other dry places where possible.
- ▶▶ Use nonskid waxes and grit-coated surfaces in slippery areas.
- ▶▶ Require slip-resistant footwear.
- ▶▶ Clean up spills immediately.
- ▶▶ Use smart housekeeping strategies, such as cleaning one side of a walkway at a time.
- ▶▶ Provide floor plugs so that power cords do not run across pathways.
- ▶▶ Keep aisles and passageways clear at all times.
- ▶▶ Reinstall or stretch carpets that bulge or have become bunched.
- ▶▶ Provide good lighting for all halls and stairwells, especially at night.

- ▶▶ Provide proper handrails and slip-resistant stair treads.
- ▶▶ Train workers to use handrails, avoid undue speed, and maintain a clear view of the stairs ahead of them.

Awareness and Participation

Of course, effective STF programs—like all safety programs—must always be accompanied by strong employee awareness and participation. For example, BJF Healthcare of St. Louis started to see the benefits of its STF efforts once it found ways to get employees to become active participants.

To encourage participation, BJF ran a "Get a Grip on Your Slips" campaign during which employees called a hotline to report what they did to prevent themselves or a co-worker from falling. By calling the hotline, employees were entered into a drawing for a prize. Another cleverly named initiative was "Save Yourself a Trip." This program also motivated employees to come up with anti-trip and fall strategies and to share them with co-workers.

Consider the Risks

Not taking action against STFs is simply not an option. Consider the risks:

*Annually, some 21,000 Americans die as a result of falls. That's more than from electrocution, drowning, and firearms incidents combined.

*Falls carry an astronomical price tag of between \$60 billion and \$80 billion each year that includes litigation, insurance and workers' comp claims, medical costs, and other indirect costs.

*Falls are the leading cause of emergency room visits, with more than 2 million Americans entering the ER each year as a result.

*Falls are the number one cause of accidental death among the elderly and are the leading cause of nursing home admissions.

*Every hour, falls are responsible for one death and 183 ER visits.

The right kind of workplace flooring can help prevent falls and injuries. A recent ANSI standard rates flooring traction levels and provides a way to measure risk.



May Safety Tip

Any combustible material can burn rapidly and explode in a finely divided form.

Dust suspended in air in the right concentration can become explosive. The force from such an explosion can cause employee deaths, injuries, and destruction of entire buildings.

Some dusts, such as asbestos and silica, pose serious respiratory hazards and long-term health effects, such as pneumoconiosis.

If the people closest to the source of the hazard are properly trained, you're more likely to prevent accidents. Make sure your workers understand your dust-control programs and are trained to recognize and report unsafe conditions and to use safe work practices.

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OSHA Sets Regulatory Priorities for 2010



Hazardous chemicals and substances play leading roles in OSHA's list of regulatory priorities for 2010. Here's a quick review of expected rulemaking.

What's new with OSHA?

OSHA Chief Dr. David Michaels says, "We're moving from reaction to prevention, beefing up enforcement, and moving the regulatory agenda forward."

Regulatory priorities for this year have been set and, as many suspected; hazardous chemicals and substances top the list.

Here's a rundown on what to expect on the rulemaking front this year.

Crystalline Silica

Exposure to airborne silica dust occurs in operations involving cutting, sawing, drilling, and crushing of concrete, brick, block, and other stone products and in operations using sand products (e.g., glass manufacturing and sand blasting).

Inhalation of respirable silica dust can cause lung disease, silicosis, and lung cancer. One study estimates that there may be as many as 7,000 new cases of chronic silicosis each year.

OSHA plans to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking in July 2010 updating its existing permissible exposure limit (PEL) for crystalline silica.

Combustible Dust

Materials that may form combustible dust include wood, coal, plastics, spice, starch, flour, feed, grain, fertilizer, tobacco, paper, soap, rubber, drugs, dyes, certain textiles, and metals.

A number of OSHA standards address aspects of this hazard, but OSHA does not have a comprehensive standard. OSHA published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking in October 2009 and is currently holding stakeholder

meetings to evaluate possible regulatory methods, and to request data and comments on issues related to combustible dust.

GHS

OSHA and other U.S. agencies have been involved in a long-term project to negotiate a globally harmonized approach to informing workers about chemical hazards. The result is the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS).

OSHA is revising its hazard communication standard to make it consistent with the GHS. The new standard will include more specific requirements for hazard classification, as well as standardized label components that will provide consistent information and definitions for hazardous chemicals and a standard approach to conveying information on MSDSs.

Beryllium

Beryllium is a lightweight metal with a wide variety of applications in many industries, including aerospace, telecommunications, and military defense. Chronic beryllium disease occurs when people inhale beryllium dust or fumes; it can take anywhere from a few months to 30 years to develop.

OSHA is developing a rule that would update the PEL.

Diacetyl

This chemical is added to foods to impart a buttery flavor. Employee exposure to diacetyl causes obstructive airway disease, often resulting in the disabling and sometimes fatal lung disease called bronchiolitis obliterans or "popcorn lung."

OSHA's planned rulemaking will establish a PEL as well as additional provisions to protect workers from exposure to diacetyl. OSHA is currently working on the proposed regulatory text and developing the health, risk, and feasibility analysis.

Efforts are also under way to streamline the lengthy rulemaking process, so expect to see more action on these and other initiatives during 2010.

May Safety Quote

"Avoid the worst. Put safety first."