

## **Fall Prevention**

Fall prevention is commonly overlooked and often times an afterthought in the work place, even though it's a vital component of workplace safety. Too often we get caught up in our activities and so focused on what we are trying to accomplish that we neglect our responsibility to look out for ourselves and co-workers in contributing to a safe work environment. Many may not realize it, but falls were the 3rd highest ranked workplace fatality that occurred in 2006, accounting for 14% of the total for that year. In addition to the numerous deaths, there are millions of people injured in falls every year. Often dangerous falls are associated with elevated work activities, but in all actuality many people have been injured or even died from falling at ground level on the very surface they were walking on.

One key element to fall prevention is to be aware of your surroundings and recognize potential fall hazards. Look for items that can be potential tripping hazards, such as clutter in the walkway, cords stretched across the floor or something jutting out in the path of travel. Also, pay attention to the conditions of the walking surface itself, such as an icy sidewalk, pot holes in the pavement, cracks, holes or missing pieces in flooring. It is always wise to practice good housekeeping by maintaining areas free from clutter and immediately cleaning up foreign substances such as water, oil or grease on the walking surface, which could cause an unknowing co-worker or customer to slip and fall. Whenever you are ascending or descending stairs, you should always use handrails when provided. Remember, the rails have been installed for a particular purpose, use them! Try not to get in a rush. Being in a rush leads to taking unnecessary short cuts, such as trying to step over obstacles, rather than simply walking around them. Walk at a moderate pace so you can maintain control and not lose your balance.

Along with looking out for hazardous conditions, make sure you communicate and document the event. This is important to make sure others are aware of the condition that either did or does exist and will know what action has or is being taken. If it is a situation that will require repairs and the hazard will exist for a while, proper identification such as warning signs and barricading may be required.

Making it a practice to observe your surroundings and to take action when you recognize a safety hazard is the proactive way to preventing an accident or injury. This is good information that can be applied at home as well as at work. We should practice safety in all aspects of our lives, not just in the work place.

## **References:**

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2008

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