

# Preventing Slips & Falls

Each year, hundreds of workers die and thousands more receive disabling injuries from falls on the job. These statistics are alarming, but as a supervisor, you can help to change them. Almost all falls are preventable. All you need to do is to recognize fall hazards and then help your workers to prevent them.

## Understanding Balance

People fall when they lose their balance and footing. In short, the center of gravity is displaced and there's nowhere to go but down. For example, slipping on a wet floor or tripping over an obstacle may cause a worker to lose his or her balance. Once he or she loses footing and support, a fall is inevitable.

## Some Common Causes of Falling at Work

At work, the following are among the most common causes of falls:

- Incorrect ladder use or using the wrong ladder for a particular job. (This includes using furniture as a ladder.),
- Wearing inappropriate footwear,
- Poor lighting,
- Obstacles in walkways, and
- Inattention and hurrying.

The following checklist can help you and your staff to prevent falls before they happen.

## The Checklist

- ✓ Encourage your staff to use a ladder or stepladder – not furniture – when they need to reach items up high.
- ✓ Show your employees how to use the 4-1 ladder rule (set the base of the ladder one-foot away from the wall for every four feet of ladder height).
- ✓ Instruct employees to have someone support the base of the ladder.
- ✓ Never let employees use the top two rungs of a ladder.
- ✓ Encourage employees to ask for help rather than to overreach, especially when they are on a ladder.
- ✓ Keep walking surfaces clear of wire, cords, and cables.
- ✓ Require employees to wear suitable footwear with slip-resistant soles. Provide employees with training on the importance of good housekeeping practices and of cleaning up spills immediately.
- ✓ Make sure halls and stairways have adequate lighting.
- ✓ Encourage your employees to look before they walk, especially if they are carrying a child, to make sure their path is clear.
- ✓ Make picking up toys a regular activity. This encourages children to be tidy and helps to keep floors free of potential trip hazards.
- ✓ Insist that workers walk, not run.

