



Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls



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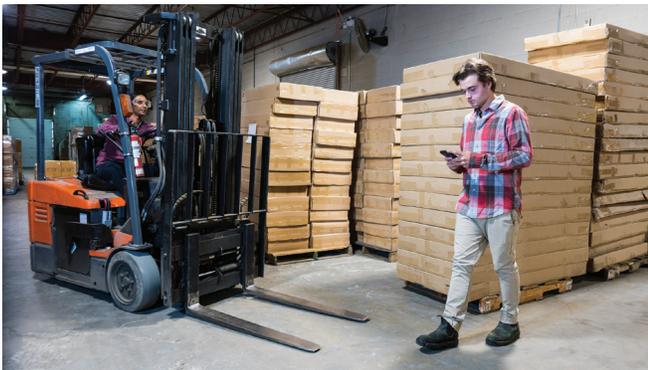
Though they might seem harmless, slips, trips and falls are some of the most common hazards we face in the workplace and they can have serious consequences. Always following safety procedures is crucial to avoiding injury, but so is speaking up to keep your coworkers safe.

We've all been in a situation where a coworker was doing something risky and we weren't sure what to say. Here are some scenarios to consider and tips for handling these sometimes difficult conversations.

Scenario #1

You and a coworker are taking the stairs. Your coworker's arms are full with tools, coffee and a cell phone. They kindly refuse your offer to help carry a few items but then struggle up the stairs.

- Though many of us use them every day, a trip or fall down the stairs can cause serious injuries. Handrails exist for a reason so always keep a hand free when taking the stairs and encourage those around you to use the handrails.
- Open drink containers like coffee mugs can easily cause spills that then create fall hazards. Remind your coworkers to always use containers with a lid to avoid spills.
- We often refuse assistance even when we could use it. If your coworker has their arms full, insist on carrying a few items so you can both get up the stairs safely.



Scenario #2

You're walking with a few coworkers when one of them gets a text message from their spouse. They look down at their phone and attempt to text back as you all walk through a busy worksite.

- Distracted walking is a serious risk and can turn something as simple as a box into a major hazard. Just because it seems silly doesn't mean we should ignore it.
- In this instance, consider stopping and telling your coworker you'll wait with them while they finish sending their message.



- You can also be more direct, telling your coworker it is unsafe and pointing out hazards they might trip over. We can sometimes be defensive in these situations, so frame the conversation around your coworker's safety and encourage them to finish the text message once they're sitting in the break room.

Scenario #3

You notice a coworker's desk or workstation is particularly messy, with items spilling out into the hallway. They are focused on a task and don't seem to notice the mess.

- Whether it's an open filing cabinet drawer, some scattered papers on the floor or just an extra pair of shoes sticking out where people walk, these are hazards that are easily cleaned up but can cause serious injuries if left unchecked.
- We can be sensitive about our belongings, so this is another situation where it pays to avoid blame or shame. You can simply point out the hazard and offer to help clean it up with your coworker.
- If the problem persists, try being more direct and pointing out the risk it creates. In the workplace, these types of falls on the same level injured 142,770 people – and killed 151 – in 2017.¹

Remember to always report hazards to either your supervisor, safety team or through a hazard reporting system if you have one. Odds are that others are dealing with similar hazards that could be resolved with a broader solution.

Bring it home

When you see a risk with a simple fix, don't hesitate to fix it safely. This applies whether you are at work, back home or out in your community. Sometimes that fix means cleaning up a mess you didn't create or having a quick, awkward conversation, but the end result is worth it. Embrace this concept and you can help us all keep each other safe.

References

¹ *Injury Facts*®, Falls – Same Level, 2019

<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/safety-topics/falls-same-level/>