

Army **Safety** Gram

Leading on the Edge for Safety **Excellence**

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There's Nothing Funny About Falls

Slips, trips and falls have been a sure way to get a laugh in many cultures over the years. Human beings have been falling over their own feet ever since they first began to walk.

However, except in slapstick comedy, falls are simply not funny. In fact, the subject of falls is extremely serious. Did you know that falls are one of the top leading causes of accidental deaths?

In case you are thinking that falls are only a danger to people who work on scaffolds and steel girders up in the sky, think again. Most falls actually occur on the same level and are caused by just tripping over an obstacle or slipping on something.

Here are some ways to prevent falls:

- ◆ Keep walkways and floors free of obstacles such as boxes, cords, and litter. Even objects such as pencils on the floor have caused serious falls.
- ◆ Flooring surfaces must be even and secured. Watch out for obstacles such as loose tiles or carpeting.
- ◆ Close cabinet drawers and doors as soon as you are through with them. Many serious injuries have occurred when people fell over unexpected obstacles like an open bottom drawer on a desk.
- ◆ Don't run or walk too fast.
- ◆ Adjust your walking speed and style to the surface you are traveling on. If the surface is rough, cluttered, slippery or at an angle such as a ramp, you need to slow down and take small careful steps.
- ◆ Wear safe footwear, with low heels and a good fit. Keep your shoelaces tied. Avoid slippery soles and be sure to wear shoes with adequate tread when walking on icy, greasy or wet surfaces. Keep shoes in good repair. A defect such as a nail coming through the heel can cause a person to slip.
- ◆ Make sure you can see over or around any load you are carrying.
- ◆ Take your near-misses seriously. Let's say you have just skidded across a slick patch of flooring or tripped over an extension cord. You are not injured, but just a little shaken and embarrassed. Take the time to see why the incident occurred in the first place and identify what can be done to prevent it from happening again. Does the floor need non-skid matting? Should the cord be moved or taped down? Were you hurrying or daydreaming?



It is important to stay alert to slipping and tripping hazards in your work area and the routes which you travel in the course of your shift. Watch out for hazards which might put you in danger of a fall. Think of the other person too. You might know that the corner of the rug is loose or that the floor around that leak is always wet. But some other unsuspecting person might fall victim to these hazards.