

Catholic Mutual. . ."CARES"

LIABILITY CONTROL

SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS – SOME BASIC INFORMATION

Each year, approximately 13,000,000 people are injured because of slips, trips, and falls. These particular incidents result in lost work days, broken bones, "bad backs", temporary disability, permanent disability, and sometimes death. Statistics have shown that falls are extremely costly and that nearly 7,000 people die each year as a result of falls in the home, while approximately 4,000 people die each year as a result of falls either on the job, or in public places.

Most falls do not occur from high places, instead, they are a direct result from slips or trips at floor level.

Let us examine each one of these particular categories to see what comprises a slip, a trip, and a fall.

Slips

A slip is a loss of balance which results when not enough friction is maintained between our feet and the surface that we are walking or working on. The cause factors of most slips can be attributed to wet surfaces, weather hazards such as ice or snow, or spills of some type. Our lackadaisical attitude also is a contributing factor to the slip injuries that are taking place when we do not wear the proper shoes with adequate traction for the particular surface that we are walking or working on, when we tend to walk in a careless manner, or when we ignore the occasional spills that have occurred.

Trips

A trip is a loss of our balance that results from our forward or reverse motion being interrupted by some object. The cause factors of most trips can be attributed to poor housekeeping, lighting that is inappropriate or inadequate, aisles or passageways that have obstacles in them, taking any type of shortcut and walking on surfaces that are loose or uneven. A trip hazard is likely to occur at home, at work, or in a public place.

Falls

A fall is a result of our movement too far from our center of balance. Perhaps, the best method of describing this particular situation is that the force of gravity has taken us from a position of instability and placed us back in a position of stability. The cause factors of falls can be attributed to ladders that are improperly set on uneven surfaces, trying to overextend our reach while on a ladder, and the creation of makeshift ladders. Additionally, we should point out that slips or trips, more often than not, result in a fall that is extremely painful.

There are a number of things that we can do to prevent slips, trips, and falls; however, our success will be dependent upon our attitude and our commitment. If we show our concern about this issue, we can keep the odds against accidents in our favor because of our attitude. The manner in which we approach the situation and our state of mind that says "LET'S DO IT THE SAFE WAY – even if it takes a little longer or is more difficult", is the critical factor. Finally, we can do much to minimize these hazards if we develop our skills in the area of RECOGNITION, AVOIDANCE, and CONTROL.

RECOGNITION is being attentive to the many hazards and making sure that our path of travel is free from these hazards.

AVOIDANCE is merely walking around these hazards, stepping over these hazards, or slowing down for these hazards, so that we can keep our balance.

CONTROL is marking these hazards clearly so that other individuals will not get hurt; or fixing the hazards ourselves if capable, and if not, making sure that the appropriate individual is contacted so that the hazard will be repaired promptly.

To assist in your slips, trips, and falls prevention efforts, a Slips, Trips, and Falls Safety Survey has been developed and is available for your use.