



Southern Building Material Association's Safety E-Newsletter

OCTOBER 2011

"MEMBERSHIP PAYS."

Don't Take Falls Lightly

Question: What does this number represent? \$6.2 billion

Answer: In 2007, disabling workplace injuries from same level falls resulted in \$6.2 billion in US workers' compensation claims. (Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index)

Here are a few more fall-related statistics:

- In Canada about 15 percent of all lost-time worker injuries are related to falls. (Pulp and Paper Health and Safety Association)
- About 37 percent of workplace injuries in the US are related to slips, trips and falls. (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)
- 60% of falls occur on the same level. (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety)
- 84 workers in the US died in 2008 as a result of same-level falls. (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

It's easy to take the subject of falls lightly, but this commonplace accident can be both costly and deadly.

Share these fall prevention tips with your workers to reduce their risk of injury:

- Keep clutter picked up. Common causes of falls are debris, tools and materials on the floor.
- Arrange work spaces so there are clear passages for walking. Remove or cover cords and cables on walking routes. Store boxes of materials away from traffic areas.
- Close desk and cabinet drawers and doors as soon as you use them. Many accidents are caused by tripping over them.
- Keep walking surfaces free of water, oil, mud and ice. Watch especially for slippery surfaces on sidewalks, stairways, in entryways, around machinery, in lunch areas and washrooms.
- Wear footwear which will prevent slipping and tripping. Avoid slippery soles and wear well-fitting, correctly fastened footwear. Special non-slip footwear is available for special work situations.
- Work areas and traffic routes must be well-lit. Report or replace burned out light fixtures. Do not store materials where they will block the light from windows or lighting systems. Keep windows and light fixtures clean. While dim light would ordinarily be considered a contributor to falls, light that is too bright can also create conditions which cause you to fall.



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Keep walking surfaces free of water, oil, mud and ice.



Report any walking surface hazards such as obstacles, loose carpet, tile or stair treads.



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- Stick to established traffic routes. Falls can be caused by taking short-cuts through areas that contain unexpected obstacles.
- If you must walk on a low-friction, slippery surface, take small, deliberate steps.
- Use the handrail on stairways. Never run up or down stairs. Do not store any objects on the stairs and do not permit others to do so.
- Report any walking surface hazards such as obstacles, loose carpet, tile or stair treads.
- Never use makeshift climbing devices. Get a step stool or ladder, and use it properly, if you must reach a higher surface. Don't stand on chairs!

If you do start to fall, you can lessen the impact and prevent injury by:

- Relaxing your muscles
- Doing what you can to protect your head and spine from injury
- Trying to land on a soft, fleshy part of your body
- Rolling in the direction of the fall so that you do not stop all at once

OSHA Issues Workplace Violence Compliance Directive

A directive on Enforcement Procedures for Investigating or Inspecting Incidents of Workplace Violence has been issued by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), to help OSHA field staff better respond to such incidents.

The directive establishes uniform procedures for responding to incidents and complaints of workplace violence and conducting inspections in industries considered particularly vulnerable to workplace violence. These include healthcare and social service settings and late-night establishments.

OSHA says workplace violence is a serious recognized occupational hazard ranking among the top four causes of death in workplaces during the past 15 years. More than 3,000 people died across the US as a result of workplace homicide between 2006 and 2010, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A recent OSHA inspection of a psychiatric hospital in Maine found more than 90 instances of staff being assaulted on the job by patients between 2008 and 2010. The hospital was cited for not providing its workers with adequate safeguards against workplace violence and issued a proposed fine of more than \$6,000.

“These incidents and others like them can be avoided or decreased if employers take appropriate precautions to protect their workers,” says OSHA Administrator Dr. David Michaels.

Top 10 Barriers to Near-Miss Reporting

It's a given that reporting of near misses reduces injury incidents. A report of a near miss (cl) creates an opportunity for identifying and removing hazardous conditions and work practices

Then why is it so difficult to get your people to report near misses? Maybe they're discourag these common barriers:

1. They don't know they are supposed to report near misses.
2. They don't know how to go about it. They don't know they should go to the supervisor.



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A good chair significantly reduces the risk of lower back pain or injury.



3. They are afraid of being reprimanded or disciplined for actions that led to the incident.
4. They feel pressure from co-workers to keep quiet so nobody gets into trouble.
5. They are under pressure to maintain a clean incident record because the team will win a prize.
6. They are new and want to make a good impression.
7. The work culture says "suck it up and don't make a big deal out of it."
8. Co-workers are viewing the incident with humor instead of seeing the hazard. If everyone is laughing, how serious could it be?
9. Last time they tried to talk to the supervisor about something, they were belittled or disregarded.
10. It's just too much trouble filling out those forms.

10 Easy Ways to Reduce Workplace Injuries

Increasingly, computer-related health injuries are a leading cause of workplace occupational hazards. Computer usage is common by a substantial part of the working environment all over the world.

There are ways to reduce computer-related health trauma, by observing safety measures to counter injuries caused by the office environment. Occupational safety measures recommend healthy use of computers so as to lessen the negative impact on human health.

Safety professionals are now advocating precautions in the use of computers that have become virtual standalone offices. Health problems caused by exposure to computers occur through cumulative trauma disorders connected with prolonged interaction on machines.

Common fatigue may be more than just physical stress. Stay on guard if symptoms persist after a night of rest or interfere significantly with work-related activities. If the problem is indeed work-related then you need to look for ways to adjust to your work environment and work towards alleviating workplace health problems.

Here are 10 easy steps to do ensure a healthy work environment:

1. Counter the effect of carpal tunnel syndrome of the wrist and hand by relieving yourself of the mouse and keyboard from time to time. Take breaks to let your fingers relax and enjoy hand rubs in between.
2. You need to adjust the location of work and the angle of the machine in such a way that your body continuously maintains an unstrained and comfortable position. Your arms, forearms and shoulders should be fully relaxed.
3. More often it is the continuous exposure to the computer monitor that may be the cause of eyestrain. In this case you should always have a quality glare filter fixed on your monitor screen.
4. Work with a light screen background (dark type or images on white or pale background). You'll find it is easier on your eyes.
5. Place the monitor and source documents so that they are about the same distance from your eyes. Use a document holder immediately next to the monitor.
6. Rest the muscles of your eyes by focusing on a distant object occasionally.
7. Change your body position periodically throughout the day.
8. The position of the keyboard should be at a proper level in front of you. It is



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important to ensure proper elbow height that enables you to type with straight wrists.

9. It's important to be completely relaxed while working on the computer. Injuries and pain can be a problem if you remain constantly tensed as that affects the muscles of the neck and shoulders.

10. A good chair significantly reduces the risk of lower back pain or injury. An ergonomic chair provides comfortable lumbar support and allows for a variety of seated postures.

How to Prevent Back Problems at Work

You can hardly afford to let back problems interfere with work. Because work schedules can be adversely affected by physical disabilities caused by continued back problems, it's best to look for ways to prevent or alleviate pain in your back. In cases of unspecified medical conditions, back aches could probably be the result of a combination of factors. These may range from genetic to lifestyle-related problems. Certain sedentary jobs are also known to aggravate the back. Back pain can make it difficult to concentrate on the job at hand, but making the effort to find out what triggers workplace back problems can help you avoid it. Whether it's a dull ache or a throbbing sensation, it can hamper your pace of work, so doing a little research will go a long way in helping you on your road to recovery.

Additionally, many occupations, such as nursing, that require odd positions and frequently bending over also make significant demands on the back. Even so, routine office work can still cause back distress. Here are a few suggestions to help avoid back pain by understanding what causes them and focusing on prevention.

The chief work-related factors associated with back pain are exerting too much force, repetitive physical movements, awkward body postures and even mental pressure or stress, which lead to muscle tension.

If there is no direct medical problem, then back aches are commonly due to lack of exercise—it's always best to remain fit. If a back problem persists despite exercise, then you need to consider looking into the cause. For instance, it could be a wrong chair, incorrect height of a table or continued wrong posture.

Remember, even if you have a job that requires continued activity, it is not an alternative to exercise. You need to regularly include a balance of cardiovascular workouts and muscle training in your exercise program to help keep your back in healthy condition. You also need to keep your weight in check. Appropriate weight as per height helps minimize stress on the back.

Certain strengthening and stretching exercises that focus on toning your back muscles are very helpful for preventing back aches. Such strengthening exercises help your back muscles as well as your lower spine. Strong and flexible muscles keep the back fit and healthy. You also need to pay proper attention to posture. Bad posture always affects the back. Slouching or sway-back positions where you compromise the body's natural position causes muscle fatigue. You can almost always keep back muscles in good order just by keeping a healthy body balance. Finally, if you have anything stressful weighing on your mind, then you need to address it immediately. Being under constant mental stress causes your muscles to tense. The more stress you experience, the lower your tolerance to pain—minimize your sources of stress and develop coping mechanisms.