NOVEMBER
SAFETY TALK

Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are one of the leading cause of injuries in municipalities!

SLIPS: Slips most commonly occur when the back heel strikes the ground and weight is transferred to the lead foot. If the lead foot slips out, the support base is lost and a fall occurs.

Many lower back injuries occur when a person carrying or lifting an object tries to recover from a slip or loss of balance. To prevent slips, wear appropriate footwear and keep walking surfaces clean. If you can, use mechanical means (carts, etc.) to transport items.

Working outside? Slips are difficult to predict and often hard to avoid. Wearing appropriate footwear, including ice cleats in some locations, will lessen the chance of a slip. Here's an interesting finding in a study for WorkSafeBC: When slippery conditions are expected, people change the way they walk to avoid slipping. But once they slip once, they have the same likelihood of slipping again as those who aren't aware.

TRIPS: Abrupt changes in the height of a walking surface present a tripping hazard, even if the change is as little as 1 cm. Making the transition from a low-slip resistance surface to a high-slip resistance surface, can also cause tripping.

To prevent tripping, make a point of adapting your walk to the surface. Some other precautions include:

- keeping as few objects as possible on walking and working surfaces;
- eliminating abrupt changes in walking surface height; and,
- where possible, replacing stairs with ramps between levels.

FALLS: Serious injuries can occur from a fall on the same surface, let alone a fall of a few or several feet. People have died or been paralyzed after falling just a few feet.

Falls from ladders cause serious injuries each year. For more tips on ladder safety, see the September Crew Talk.

FALL PROTECTION REGULATION

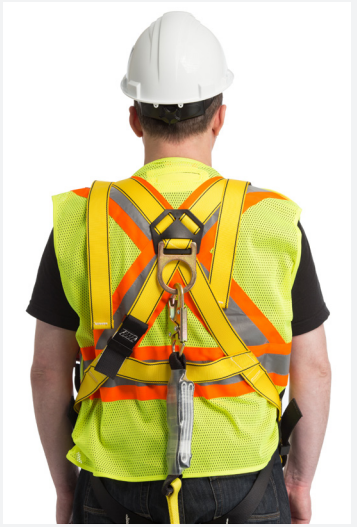
Part 11 of WorkSafeBC Occupational Health & Safety Regulation details the requirements for an effective fall protection system.

In order to prevent falls, this is the hierarchy that must be followed. The hierarchy applies when working at a height of 3 meters or more, or from lower heights if there are other hazards such as rebar sticking up through the concrete.

1. Guardrails to prevent you from going over the side. If installing guardrails is not possible,
2. Fall restraint, to prevent you from reaching the edge. In the absence of guardrails or fall restraint,
3. Fall arrest, to prevent you from hitting the ground.
4. If none of these measures are possible, there needs to be a marking and monitoring system such as ropes and ribbons, and a fellow worker standing by to alert you if you are getting too close to the drop off.

When there is the risk of a fall of 7.6 meters or more, or if using #4 above, there must be a written fall protection program.

If working from a boom lift, personal protective equipment such as a harness and lifeline are mandatory as soon as the worker enters the bucket.



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