

## news & notes

### SLIP AND TRIP STATISTICS

Slips, trips, and falls make up the majority of general industry accidents. They cause 15 percent of all accidental occupational deaths, second only to motor vehicles.

Furthermore, in most years, slips, trips, and falls result in somewhere between 15 percent and 20 percent of all nonfatal workplace injuries, the highest frequency of injury of any single regulated activity.

In one recent year, for example, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that more than 230,000 workers in the United States sustained nonfatal injuries from slips, trips, and falls, each resulting in one or more days away from work. Although some of those injuries were only temporarily disabling, others left workers permanently disabled.

You don't have to fall from a great height to get injured. Many fall injuries occur on level ground when people trip over unexpected objects in their path.



"Jack and Jill have registered an official complaint about some trip hazards on the hill."



*October 2015*

## Don't slip up! *Avoid slips, trips, and falls*

Slips happen when there is a loss of grip between a person's shoe and the floor. Trips happen when a person's foot hits a low obstacle in his or her path, causing a loss of balance. Here are several situations and actions that can cause slip and trip hazards:

- Floor contaminants such as water, oil, grease, dust, and metal shavings;
- Floor surfaces, which require sufficient grip to prevent slipping;
- Uneven flooring, trailing cables, loose mats, and changes in floor surface level;
- Poor visibility caused by inadequate lighting, including burned out lights in halls, stairwells, and outside;
- Other environmental factors, including unexpected loud noises;
- Behaviors such as talking on a cell phone or not holding the handrail on stairs;
- Footwear, which should be suitable for the type of work and environment and comfortable with adequate nonslip sole and tread pattern;
- Not picking things off the floor;
- Not watching where you're going, or carrying something you can't see over;
- Running or walking too quickly;
- Spills and wet or slippery floors;
- Clutter on stairs or in walkways;
- Open drawers; *and*
- Lack of caution on ladders.

Here are several ways to help eliminate slip and trip hazards:

- **Practice good housekeeping.** Don't leave boxes, tools, or other materials on the floor.
- **Clean properly** to ensure that contaminants are effectively removed and there is no buildup of cleaning product residue on walking surfaces.
- **Step over or around obstructions,** not on them.
- **Walk and change directions slowly,** especially when carrying a load.
- **Watch for changes in floor level.**
- **If lighting is inadequate or bulbs are burned out, report the problem to maintenance right away.** Never enter a dark room or area before turning on a light. Outside, use a flashlight at night if you need more light coming to or going from the workplace.
- **Don't block walkways** with hand trucks, forklifts, cords, or other equipment.
- **Don't place anything on stairs.**
- **Don't leave drawers open.**

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### STANDARD TIME SAFETY

For most people in the United States, daylight saving time ends at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 1. According to a Carnegie Mellon University study by Professors Paul Fischbeck and David Gerard, pedestrians walking around at dusk are nearly three times more likely to be struck and killed by cars in the days following the return to standard time than just before the time change.

Ending daylight saving time results in about 37 more U.S. pedestrian deaths around 6:00 p.m. in November compared to October, according to the study.

It's not the darkness that's the problem, but rather the lack of adjustment to earlier nighttime, the professors report. They studied 7 years of nationwide traffic fatalities and calculated the risk per mile walked for pedestrians. They found that per-mile risk jumps 186 percent from October to November—and then drops 21 percent in December.

The December drop-off indicates the increased risk is caused by the trouble both drivers and pedestrians have adjusting when darkness suddenly comes an hour earlier, the researchers said.



# Hearing Protection Q & A

## *Get the answers to important questions*

Your hearing, like your sight, is a great gift. Imagine what it would be like if you couldn't hear music or your loved ones' voices. So make sure you take precautions to preserve your hearing. Here are some helpful questions and answers.

**Q. Won't hearing protection make it difficult to hear my co-workers?**

**A.** No. Actually, your hearing protection will often muffle the loud noises of your work environment and allow you to hear the relatively low pitched sounds of human speech. So you should be able to hear co-workers. If not, you can develop hand signals or go to a quieter spot to exchange information.

**Q. Do I still need to wear protection if I've already lost some hearing?**

**A.** Absolutely. It will help prevent your losing any more of your hearing.

**Q. What if loud noise doesn't bother me? Do I still have to use protection?**

**A.** Yes. One of the reasons loud noise might not bother you so much is that you've already lost some of your hearing. Don't take the risk of more hearing damage. Always wear assigned hearing protection when the job requires it.

Remember, your hearing protection only works if you use it!

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## National Protect Your Hearing Month

### *What you need to know*

Noise-induced hearing loss is the most common work-related illness in the United States. The level of risk is influenced by several factors, including:

- **Noise level.** As levels increase, the risk of hearing loss also increases.
- **Duration of exposure.** Longer exposure means more hazardous.
- **Impulsiveness.** Noises that have very abrupt starts and stops (such as hammering, gunfire, or fireworks) are more dangerous than constant noise of the same overall level.
- **Intermittency.** Periods of relative quiet between exposures allow the ear to rest and reduce the risk.

Exposure to certain chemicals can also cause hearing loss. These include:

- Organic solvents such as toluene, styrene, xylene, ethylbenzene, and trichloroethane;
- Heavy metals such as mercury and lead;
- Asphyxiants such as carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide; *and*
- Endocrine disruptors such as acrylonitrile.

Take these precautions to protect your hearing:

- Wear approved hearing protectors.
- Limit your exposure to loud noise—at work and at home.
- Keep machinery and equipment well-maintained to reduce noise.
- Report sources of excessive noise to a supervisor.
- Have your hearing tested regularly.