

## Toolbox Talk # 11.08 – Walking and Working Surfaces II

Slips, trips and falls are a major cause of injuries and fatalities in the construction industry. The walking surfaces and ladders on a construction site may pose a potential hazard to the workers moving about the site. Construction sites are dynamic places to work, i.e., the working conditions change on a daily, if not hourly, basis. Therefore, care must be exercised every day as you move about the work site, identifying hazards that may cause you to trip, slip or fall.

Falls occur because of various factors; a slip, stumble, trip over an object or a sudden quick movement throwing the body off balance. Slips generally occur as a result of the loss of traction between a person's foot and the walking surface. If loss of balance occurs, a fall results. The construction site safety and health programs contain provisions to protect workers from falls.

Almost all construction sites have **unprotected sides and edges, wall openings or floor holes** at some point in time. These openings and sides must be protected at the work site, or falls may occur. These potential hazards may be avoided by:

- Covering or guard floor holes as soon as they are created.
- Using a fall prevention (e.g. guard rails) or protection (fall arrest device) system if the workers are exposed to a fall of six feet or more.
- Surveying the work site prior to start of work, and continually throughout the day to identify and guard any openings or holes.

Many construction sites utilize **scaffolding** for the workers to gain access to the elevated parts of the building or structure. If the scaffolding is improperly constructed or has unsafe access, it becomes hazardous. Scaffolding hazards can be avoided by:

- Erecting all scaffolding according to manufacturer's directions and have it inspected by a competent person prior to use.
- Providing safe access to the scaffolding platforms.
- Installing guardrails along all open sides and ends according to established OSHA criteria.

**Portable ladders** are another common method of accessing elevated parts of the building or structure. If ladders are not positioned safely and securely fastened, they may move and cause a worker to fall. To avoid potential ladder hazards:

- Inspect the ladder before each use for cracked or broken parts. A broken ladder should be taken out of service and clearly marked as being unsafe.
- Do not place more weight on the ladder than what it was designed to hold.
- Secure the top of the ladder to a rigid support.
- The ladder should extend 3 feet above the landing you are accessing.
- Ensure the feet of the ladder are securely placed and will not slip out from under you.
- Ladders made on site must be able to safely hold the weight of the worker and his tools.

Slips and trips result from an unintended or unexpected change between the feet and the walking surface. Good housekeeping is the first and most important way of preventing falls due to slips and trips. Other ways to avoid creating slip and trip hazards are to:

- Wear work boots with slip resistant soles.
- Clean up any liquid spills right away.
- Take your time and pay attention to where you are going.

Ensure things you are carrying do not prevent you from seeing obstructions or spills.

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Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Other safety issues covered or comments from crew members:

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### Attendees:

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