



# Big Problem = Big Money

Coast Guard photo by PO1 Danielle DeMarino

A 2005 insurance-company study concluded that workplace slips, trips and falls account for nearly 14 percent of all costs (medical, legal and other) related to workplace injuries. The National Safety Council (NSC) estimates that these expenses total approximately \$70 billion per year, excluding the impact and expense of reduced worker productivity when injured workers have to take days (or sometimes months) off work. This lost time typically averages one to two weeks.

In the case of a death on the job, the average cost has been estimated at \$1.15 million. Add to these figures the personal and family costs and trauma, and it's evident that slips, trips and falls should be avoided. In 2005, the latest year in which figures are available from NSC, 17,700 people lost their lives in falls from one level to another or on the same level. Not

included in that number were falls in or from transport vehicles, or those that occurred while boarding or alighting from the vehicles.

Concern over these numbers has been a driving force for change. The National Safety Council and the Department of the Navy are working to enhance awareness of the crippling impact falls have on the workforce. We're educating workers through various community-service projects, preventive on-the-job training, and improved dialogue with employees. ■

#### Resources:

- [http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/osh/downloads/Slips\\_trips.doc](http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/osh/downloads/Slips_trips.doc) [*Slips, Trips and Same-Level Falls Within the Navy*]
- <http://www.nsc.org/issues/fallstop.htm> [*Falls in the Home and Community*].