

Stepping Up To Prevent *Falling Down*

A good housekeeping program is paramount to preventing slips, trips, and same-level falls in the Navy. How do you establish such a program? It requires planning ahead, assigning responsibilities, and implementing the program as part of the daily routine. The command safety office should be responsible for running the program.

Wet or Slippery Surfaces. Here are some control measures that can be implemented indoors:

- Have wet-floor signs readily available and display them.
- Use anti-skid adhesive tape to combat slips and trips.
- Use moisture-absorbent mats in entrance areas during inclement weather conditions.
- Establish a policy and identify procedures to be taken if a spill occurs.

- Apply chemical treatment to floor surfaces, which increases the coefficient of friction.

- Use continuous mats or rugs on highly polished floors, such as marble, terrazzo or ceramic tile, which can be extremely slippery, even when dry. Such flooring definitely will increase the potential for a slip when moisture is present.

Traction on outdoor surfaces can change drastically when subjected to environmental factors. Here are some controls that can be implemented:

- Keep parking lots and sidewalks clean and in good repair.
- Remove snow and ice where feasible, or treat surfaces with sand or other environmentally friendly materials that prevent slipping.
- Use adhesive stripping or anti-skid paint whenever possible.

Fall mishaps from loading docks are many.





Navy photo by PHAN Leonard J. Mandap

these docks often are congested. They're also often wet, and with the edges usually made of metal, they can become very slippery. Here are some recommended control measures:

- Use removable railing when the docks aren't in use.
- Use abrasive, skid-resistant surface coatings.

Besides using various abrasive, skid-resistant surface coatings and different kinds of rubber or rubber-like mats, here are some more control measures you can take to reduce the risk of slips and falls:

Obstacles in Walkways or Other Areas. Here are some recommended control procedures:

- Avoid stringing power cords or lines across hallways or walkways; if necessary to do so, tape them down or up to the overhead.
- Encourage safe work practices, such as closing file-cabinet drawers after use and picking up and stowing loose items from floors.
- Urge people to use caution about where they leave boxes, bags, and other items.
- Keep all work areas clean and orderly; remove and store any equipment or material away from pedestrian traffic.
- Allow sufficient clearance for maneuvering around equipment in such areas as hallways; periodically inspect these areas.

Falls From Vehicles and Equipment. Many injuries occur from the simple process of getting in and out of vehicles, equipment, machinery, or truck beds. When the steps of machinery or equipment are metal, the coefficient of friction is low and gets even lower when the steps are wet, muddy or oily. Here are some suggested control measures:

- Keep the steps clean and dry.
- Whenever mounting or climbing into a vehicle, have a good hand hold on it.

Falls From Loading Docks. Fall mishaps from loading docks are many. Part of the problem is that

Signs and Striping. These devices are helpful in reminding people about fall hazards.

Footwear. Protective footwear is required to prevent injury in wet or slippery areas. Shoes with slip-resistant soles can play a big role in preventing injuries from slips or same-level falls. Always evaluate the sole and heel of shoes to determine if they are worn out.

Lighting and Illumination. Poor and inadequate lighting in a workplace is associated with an increase in slips, trips and same-level falls. Proper lighting will ensure that personnel will be able to detect obstructions and avoid slippery areas.

Individual Behavior. Behaviors such as walking too fast or running can cause a problem. Also contributing to more slips, trips and same-level falls are people getting distracted, not watching where they're going, carrying materials that block their view, wearing sunglasses in low-light areas, and not using handrails. Other contributing factors include a lack of knowledge, impatience and bad habits.

Training and Awareness. Personnel should be trained to recognize the risks associated with slips, trips and same-level falls, as well as the changes they can make in their habits to avoid those problems. ■

This information was taken from a 1 May 2006 report by the GNO Fall-Protection Working Group.