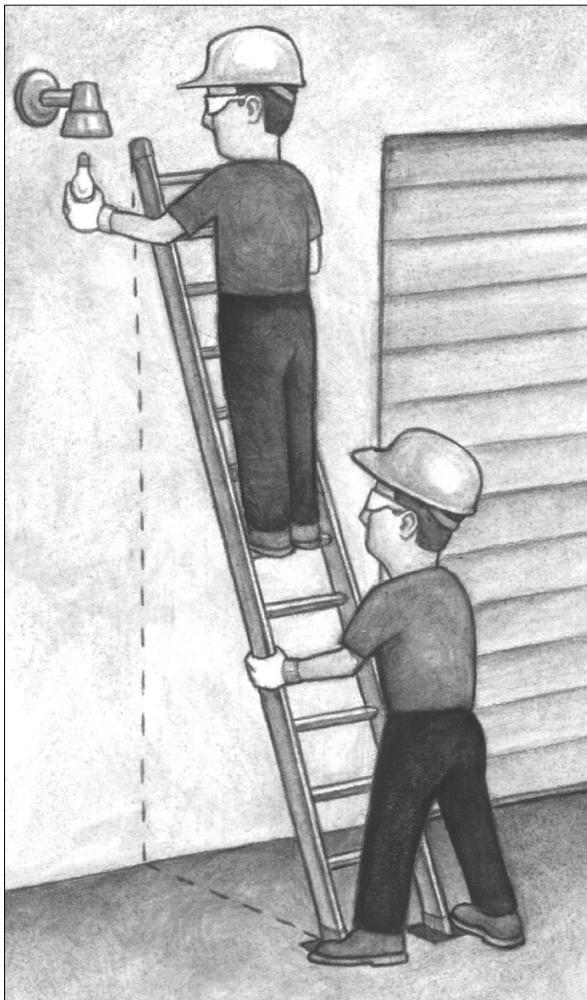


Slips and Falls



Each year, hundreds of workers die (and thousands more are left disabled) from falls on the job. The statistics are alarming, but you can help change them. The fact is, almost all falls can be prevented. All it takes is learning how to recognize fall hazards and avoid them.

Understanding Balance

A fall occurs when you lose your balance and your footing. In short, your center of gravity is displaced and there's nowhere to go but down. You can be thrown off balance by a slip (on a wet floor, for example) or trip over an obstacle in your path, but once you lose your footing and support, a fall is inevitable.

The Most Common Causes of Falls

One of the most common causes of fall hazards at a work-site is the unsafe use of ladders—using ladders incorrectly or using the wrong ladder for a particular job. Unsafe vehicle practices—failure to use safety cages, jumping on or off lift gates and so on, also invite accidental injury. Slippery surfaces and inappropriate footwear can also lead to slips and falls. Poor lighting, obstacles in walkways, inattention and hurrying are other common causes of fall-related injuries. The following checklist can help you avoid falls.

Fall Prevention Checklist

- ✓ Follow the 4-1 ladder rule (set the base of the ladder one foot away from the wall for every four feet of ladder height).
- ✓ Make sure extension ladders have safety shoes.
- ✓ Tie off the ladder or have someone support the base.
- ✓ Never use the top two rungs of a ladder.
- ✓ Avoid overreaching, especially while on a ladder.
- ✓ Make sure wires, cords and cables are kept away from walkways.
- ✓ Use safety cages and fall-restraint devices when available.
- ✓ Wear slip-resistant footwear.
- ✓ Clean up debris after each job and report accidental spills immediately.
- ✓ Report walkways and stairs that are not well lighted.
- ✓ Look before you walk—make sure your pathway is clear.
- ✓ And, finally, always walk, don't run!