



WATER & SEWER
RISK MANAGEMENT POOL



SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS Safety Program

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Revision Date: JANUARY 2016
District: SKYWAY WATER & SEWER DISTRICT

THE FOLLOWING SAFETY RELATED PROGRAM IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. THE SORT COMMITTEE HOPES THAT EACH PARTICIPATING DISTRICT WILL LOOK AT THESE PROGRAMS AND DISCUSS HOW THEY COMPARE TO THE DISTRICTS OWN PRACTICES. THESE PROGRAMS ARE NOT COMPLETE SAFETY PROGRAMS, BUT INTENDED AS GUIDELINES. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT FOLLOWING A GIVEN PROGRAM WILL ELIMINATE OR SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE THE RISK OF CLAIM OR INJURIES. IT IS EXPECTED THAT MEMBER DISTRICTS WILL CONSIDER THESE PROGRAMS AND ADAPT OR MODIFY THEM TO FIT WITH THE DISTRICT'S PARTICULAR NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

SLIPS TRIPS AND FALLS SAFETY PROGRAM

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SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS SAFETY PROGRAM

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 15% of incidental workplace deaths are caused by falls, second only to traffic accident fatalities. Falls are also the most frequent cause of non-fatal injuries in the workplace, comprising more than 50% of all reported injuries. As shocking as these statistics can be, even more shocking is the fact that following simple safety precautions and practices could have easily prevented most of these falls.

PURPOSE / SCOPE

The purpose of the **SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS** Safety Program is to ensure that all employees who enter and work [add DISTRICT NAME here] understand the potential hazards and the District's program for protecting them from those hazards to the greatest extent possible, and to establish the requirements for working safely in such an environment.

This is intended to be a universal document that describes precautions and procedures that must be followed in all cases. Field management and staff will develop Standard Operating Procedures for work at specific sites and for specific work tasks, which will take into account all safety issues and will define the most effective methods of accomplishing the work objectives safely and efficiently.

All employees are encouraged to actively participate in identifying opportunities for applying engineering controls that would reduce the hazards of **slips trips and falls**.

WHERE DO SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS OCCUR?

To those familiar with the industry, the answer to this question might seem obvious. Our jobs take us to places containing hazards of many types, including slip, trip, and fall hazards. But beware; obvious hazards sometimes overshadow less apparent but equally real hazards. A fall into a trench on a roadway can be as dangerous as a fall from a ladder at the shop or home office. Serious injuries can result from both. A slip in the shop on a pool of grease is no more serious than a slip in the office on a loose floor mat if in both cases a worker is injured. Slips, trips, and falls can occur in any environment.

The tragedy of slips, trips, and falls is that they can usually be prevented. Understanding the How's, Why's, and Where's provides a good foundation for preventing you from becoming one of the Who's. However, understanding is only the beginning; solid safety practices and attention to detail must also be used to avoid tragedy.

Definitions

Slip: To lose one's footing because of a slick or loose material on top of the walking surface.

Trip: A fall caused by a stumble or a collision with an obstruction.

Fall to lower level: A fall off of a platform or climbing device such as stairs or a ladder.

Fall to same level: A fall to the surface one is walking or standing on.

HAZARD ANALYSIS

The statement has been made that slips, trips and falls are preventable. If this is the case, what are the techniques involved? Are there safety devices that can be used? Does it take an expert to implement the procedures for the prevention of these types of accidents? Can slip, trip, and fall hazards be easily identified and avoided? This program will attempt to answer these questions.

There are tangible and intangible techniques involved in preventing falls. Tangible techniques use physical devices to prevent falls or to warn of dangerous areas. Fall prevention devices include safety harnesses and lifelines, guardrails, warning signs, traction devices such as gratings or mats, or even something as simple as proper footwear. Other techniques utilize less tangible but equally important methods to achieve a safe work environment. Such things would include training, housekeeping, safe work habits, awareness, and attitude. Of all of the techniques mentioned, attitude might be considered the overriding factor. A careless attitude can bypass all of the methods of prevention. An employee who feels that safety is not important is probably not going to remember the training given to prevent accidents. A safety harness is not going to help someone who refuses to wear one. Warning signs are worthless to one who will not read them.

In The Office

As previously mentioned, slips, trips, and falls can happen in any type of work environment. Therefore, it is as important for office personnel to be aware of these kinds of hazards as it is for field personnel. The office might seem like the last place for an accident, but an employee can easily trip over misplaced items or slip on spilled fluids, loose rugs, or mats. Anything placed in a normal pathway is a potential hazard. File or desk drawers left open are potential tripping hazards, as are power cords to computers, copiers, or any other electrically operated machines. Paperwork left on the floor is another potential for a fall. Loose paper is slippery, particularly on a hard floor, but equally hazardous is a stack of files placed on the floor next to a desk in the normal walking path. The floor is a poor substitute for a desk anyway.

Assuming that everything is in its proper place in the office, inspect the area to see if there are any additional areas of concern. Are all of the floor mats in the office flat on the floor, and secure from slipping? Make sure that if there are plastic chair mats at the desks that they are all flat and not curled up at the edges. Look for other hazards. Do any of the extension cords cross normal traffic areas? If so, they should be moved. Does the layout of the office cause people to have to step over or around obstructions? If at all possible, arrange the office so that obstacles can be easily avoided, or at least be easily seen. How about wet floors? A freshly mopped floor should be marked with a sign warning of the danger. Spills should be cleaned up as soon as possible on hard floors, but in addition, wet carpets can make the soles of shoes slick, creating problems when those shoes reach a hard floor. If the building has a leaky roof or water pipes, get these fixed as soon as possible. Again, mark any wet spots on the floor with a warning sign or a barricade.

In The Shop

Workshop areas are notorious for having slip and trip hazards. The nature of the work in shops is that there is always something different being done. Tools and equipment move constantly, changing pathways. The work is often dirty, wet, and/or oily. Without care, the workshop is a haven for slip and trip accidents.

Probably the biggest nuisance to a workshop is leaked oil, as it not only provides a slip hazard, but is a magnet for dirt and lends a shabby appearance to the area if not cleaned. When draining or filling equipment with oil, make sure that you have an oil absorption mat underneath the transfer to collect drips and spills. The shop should have a full range of oil absorption materials for all sizes of leaks and spills. Stored oils should be provided with some form of containment in case of leaking or broken containers.

Much of the equipment that comes into a water and sewer utility workshop has been out in the field and is wet and muddy. An ideal workshop floor would provide for proper drainage, but this may not always be the case, especially in older buildings. If equipment leaks while being repaired or stored, mop up the fluid as soon as it is noticed and repair or contain the leak promptly.

Any other foreign material that finds its way onto the floor should be removed as soon as possible. Such things as dirt, gravel, small nuts and bolts, nails and screws left on a hard floor create a slippery surface as easily as oil or water.

Proper storage of equipment and hand tools is as important for reasons of safety as it is for reasons of convenience. Small hand tools left on the floor are easy to trip over. Bigger equipment and tools, when stored, should be kept clear of pathways. Any equipment that is stored on shelves should be secured so it will not fall on the floor. Any power cords, air hoses, etc. should be coiled neatly out of the way when not in use, or when in use, routed so that they do not cross a normal path. If it is not possible to reroute the cord or hose, a visual warning should be used to signal the hazard.

One other thing to look for in the workshop is the available lighting. Is there enough light in all areas of the shop to illuminate potential slip and trip hazards? If possible, supplemental lighting should be provided, but if this is not possible, it is then doubly important to maintain good housekeeping in any poorly lit areas.

Ramps And Stairways

It is very important to exercise caution around ramps and stairways, since falls of this nature are usually to a lower level, which increases both the risk and severity of injury. Inspect any stairways and ramps around the work area, both indoors and out. Any type of climbing devices should be fashioned so that sufficient traction is provided to the walking surface. Some types of surfaces are appropriate for dry areas, and others are more appropriate in potentially wet areas. Many safety supply companies have a variety of traction materials, such as non-skid paints and decals, which can be added to stairs or ramps. Good traction is as important on interior stairways and ramps as it is on the exterior. After all, inside floors sometimes get wet too. Stairways and ramps should also have handrails for climbers to use. Lighting in and around stairways and ramps is very important so that the climber can see every step of the way. Finally, it is important that stairways and ramps do not become substitute storage areas.

While using stairs and ramps, use the handrails provided. Take one step at a time on stairs; never skip steps. Walk; do not run. Watch your step. If using a ramp or a stairway open on one edge, stay well clear of that edge. These rules apply equally for climbing or descending

In The Field

While doing jobs out in the field, especially near a road, it is easy to forget something as fundamental as taking precautions against slips, trips, and falls. But there are hazards here as well, and care must be exercised to protect the general public as well as employees. To start with, a job site should be well secured and/or visibly marked so that passers-by do not cross into a hazardous area. Once this is accomplished, care must be taken so that the designated safe area remains safe. First, do not allow the public to get too close to a hole or a ditch. Second, keep all tools, parts, and equipment, within the designated work area and out of the path of passing pedestrians and vehicles. Third, keep any debris, from an excavation, within the work area.

Following those procedures should ensure public safety, but what about you and your co-workers? Here again, the basic safety guidelines of your shop should help to minimize tripping hazards. The key is to pay attention, and watch your step! The other thing to remember is that a neat work area is easier and safer to walk across than a sloppy, disorderly work area. Keep tools and parts grouped together neatly, and return tools to their storage areas as soon as you are finished with them. Try to keep tools like shovels and pry bars visible and out of pathways, as these are particularly easy to trip over on a job. Whenever possible, designate one person to be responsible for maintaining an orderly job site.

Seasonal Hazards

Seasonal hazards are caused by nature, not neglect. There are dangers inherent in dealing with rain, snow, ice, fallen leaves, and other season-specific hazards. Seasonal hazards may be difficult or impossible to prevent, but there are fairly effective strategies for contending with them. Paths and walkways should be maintained and kept free of leaves and other debris. Leaves create a specific hazard because they are slippery, even when they are dry. Snow and ice should be removed, if practical. Walkways, stairways and parking lots should be sanded or salted. If possible, areas that have frequent rainfall should be equipped with non-skid surfaces on all walkways and stairways.

One further note: Naturally occurring ice patches are only one type of ice hazard. Maintenance practices, which do not pose problems during normal weather conditions, can pose serious problems during icy conditions. This is another case where precautions must be taken not only for district employees, but also for the general public. Any activity that causes you to leave water or other fluid on a walkway, roadway, is a potential ice hazard. Such activities might include pumping out a vault, flushing a water main, or filling a water tank. If possible, design your project with the specific objective of keeping sidewalks and roads from coming in contact with water. Use hoses on pumps to divert water to a storm drain. If water finds its way onto a sidewalk, remove it or erect a barricade until freezing conditions cease. If such precautions are not taken, any injury to the general public is considered the district's fault. This creates not only a financial liability but also causes the district's customers to lose confidence in district employees.

Protecting Yourself

Assume that someone has taken care of the maintenance and housekeeping chores. You are now working in a slip and trip free environment, correct? Unfortunately this is not always the

case. Things can change fast in a work environment; so one must always be on guard for open drawers, fallen tools, spilled liquids, etc. Your own eyes can be the best personal protection of all. A slip or trip hazard that is seen can be avoided.

Try not to run or hurry through a work area. Walk normally. Hurrying can cause you to miss seeing a hazard, and it can also cause you to lose your footing. A quick change of direction can cause your feet to slide out from underneath you. Also, do not take shortcuts through an area that has slip and trip hazards. A few saved steps can prove to be costly if you fall.

A work area is for work, and it is the last place for “horseplay”. Wrestling, chasing, throwing things at co-workers, water fights, etc., can lead to injuries of all sorts, including falls. It is bad enough to receive an injury on the job; it is especially tragic if that injury was the result of unsafe actions.

Footwear is a key to personal protection. Shoes should have a good non-skid sole, and appropriately chosen for the area (don't wear high-heeled shoes into a workshop if it can be avoided) Make sure your shoes are in good repair; a loose sole can catch on carpet easily. Loose fitting shoes can trip you on any surface. Clean off foreign materials from the bottom of shoes or boots before entering buildings with smooth floors.

.Carrying Objects

It is especially important to beware of slips, trips, and falls while carrying objects, particularly if they are heavy. Injury to yourself can be increased greatly if you fall while carrying a load. Even if the object you are carrying does not fall on you, its weight can cause your body to twist in painful ways.

The very act of carrying an object can bring about a fall hazard. If the object is large enough, it can block your vision. Carrying something while walking backwards is particularly hazardous; this usually happens while two or more people are carrying a load. If the load you are carrying blocks your view, get a co-worker to help spot for you. The extra weight of a load can change your balance, especially in areas that might be slick or have obstacles, so extra caution is necessary. Light, but otherwise bulky items can also cause problems in windy conditions, especially where ice is present. Use caution and common sense when carrying a load.

How To Cross A Slippery Surface

Sometimes it is unavoidable; you must cross an area covered with something slippery, but there are techniques to help reduce your chance of a fall. First, go slowly and cautiously. Second, bend your knees slightly and try to lower your center of gravity. Next, walk with your toe pointed slightly out, and if at all possible with your arms out away from your body. This will help you maintain your balance. Finally, take small, even shuffling steps while making no sudden moves.

What To Do In Case Of A Fall

If you have followed all of the guidelines thus far, you have reduced your chances of finding yourself in a fall. In a perfect world, following all of these rules would keep you perfectly safe from a fall, but we do not live in a perfect world. What do you do if you find yourself in a fall? The first thing to do is to try to free your hands to try to catch yourself. This might not always be physically possible while carrying a load. If it is possible, do not hesitate to drop what you are carrying. Next, try to protect any of your vulnerable points, such as head, neck, spine, internal organs and joints.

In case of an injury

, the victim should not move until the type and extent of the injury is determined. If you are the victim, do not be in a hurry to hop up on your feet unless you are positive that movement is necessary or that it will not further injure yourself. If someone else is the victim, the same basic first aid rules apply; do not move the injured person, unless necessary, until the injury is diagnosed. When it is time to move the injured party, try to immobilize the injured part of the body as best as possible. Splint if appropriate. Always be conscious of the possibility of shock. For serious injuries, call for qualified medical help before anything else is done.

Conclusion

Most falling accidents are completely preventable and unnecessary. Awareness of the hazards, as well as safe practices and attitudes can eliminate most slip, trip, and fall accidents.

APPROVALS

Safety Committee Chairperson	Date	General Manager	Date
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