

High Heels as a Workplace Safety Hazard



Any woman who has ever worn high heels knows that they're hazardous to your health. In addition to the stress and strain high heels put on your feet, they also expose you to an increased risk of tripping and falling.

Although the hazards of high heels have been studied in general, no one has looked at them as a workplace hazard—at least until now. A 23-year-old student recently compiled a report on high heels and workplace injuries for a class at the University of Alberta.

Brittany Gora surveyed 35 female servers and 100% said they had slipped, tripped or fallen in the workplace—on average more than once a week. Of the 40% who were injured from falling at work, 93% said they were wearing heels at the time.

According to Gora, who has worked as a server herself for five years, there's a significant risk in terms of slipping in the workplace because of contaminants on the floor or the floor surface itself in addition to the pain associated with wearing heeled shoes in general.

Falls in heels can be more serious than just a sprained ankle. For example, one respondent badly cut and bruised her legs when she fell down a flight of stairs holding a bucket of steak knives. Another had a tray of dishes fall on top of her and sliced her leg and hand on broken plates.

Are the employers to blame? 91% of respondents said they were required by their employers to wear heels in the workplace. But none were supplied with footwear and only 23% had an employer suggest safe or appropriate shoes. The employers that did recommend specific brands, chose ones that cost upwards of \$100.

Gora believes that if employers are going to make heels mandatory in the workplace, they should provide safe footwear or enforce thicker, lower or slip-resistant heels.

Do you agree with Gora's position? Should the wearing of high heels on the job be regulated or banned in the OHS laws?