

Spot The Safety Violation: Small Hazards Can Have Big Consequences



What do you think happened to this worker after this picture was taken'



It's really easy to focus so much time and effort on protecting workers from major safety hazards, such as pinch-points, hazardous substances and unguarded openings, that small hazards can go unaddressed. For example, 'little things' such as wet floors, loose steps and ice can cause workers to slip, trip or fall.

In this picture, the worker's foot is about to get tangled in the cord. He could easily trip, fall and perhaps sprain his ankle, injure his knee or hit his head on other equipment in the room. In fact, CCOHS says that about 42,000 workers are injured each year in such incidents, accounting for about 17% of all time-loss injuries covered by workers' comp across Canada.

Failing to address slip, trip and fall hazards can result in not only injuries to workers but also fines to their employers.

Example: After a nurse gave a patient medication, she left the bedside and caught her foot in a cable attached to equipment in place on the bed. She lost her balance and fell, breaking her arm. The cord hadn't been properly secured. In fact, dangling cords were a known safety hazard and had been documented in the JHSC's inspection records. The hospital pleaded guilty to failing to provide adequate information, instruction and supervision as to avoiding trip hazards associated with cords and was fined \$50,000 [*St. Joseph's Health Care London*, Govt. News Release, June 5, 2014].

Injuries from slips, trips and falls are such a problem in European workplaces that the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) launched a Campaign for the Prevention of Work Accidents due to Slips and Trips on the Same Level 2014.

9 AREAS TO ADDRESS TO PREVENT FALLS

The good news about slip, trip and fall hazards is that they're some of the easiest to eliminate or otherwise address. Here are some tips for employers from EU-OSHA on nine areas to address to prevent falls:

Good housekeeping. Maintain good housekeeping practices in your workplace. Keep the work environment tidy, with floors and access routes kept clear of

obstacles. Remove trash regularly and keep work areas clean. Use cleaning methods and equipment that are suitable for the surface being treated. (See, Housekeeping Requirements under the OHS Laws. And use this housekeeping checklist.)

Lighting. Ensure adequate lighting levels, positioning lights to ensure all floor areas are evenly lit and all potential hazards, obstructions and spills can be clearly seen.

Inspections. Floors should be checked for damage regularly and maintenance carried out when necessary. Potential hazards include holes, cracks and loose carpets and mats. (Use this slips, trips and falls inspection checklist.)

Floors. Floor surfaces should be suitable for the work carried out, such as resistant to oil and chemicals used in production processes. Coating or chemically treating existing floors can improve their slip-resistant properties.

Stairways. Handrails, slip-resistant covers on steps, high visibility and non-slip markings on the front edges of steps and good lighting can all help to prevent slips and trips on stairs.

Spills. Clean up spills immediately using an appropriate cleaning method. Use warning signs where the floor is wet and arrange alternative routes.

Obstructions. When possible, remove them. If that's not possible, then use suitable barriers and warning notices.

Cords. Place equipment so power cords don't cross pedestrian routes. Use covers to securely fix cords to surfaces.

Footwear. Workers should wear suitable footwear. Take account of the type of job, floor surface, typical floor conditions and the slip-resistant properties of the soles.