

Trips and Falls in the Office

Loss Control Bulletin

For most workers, a business office represents a sheltered, safe work environment where few inherent hazards are likely to exist. The lack of industrial machinery and hazardous chemicals or operations may instill a false sense of security in such settings. As in any workplace, hazards can quickly appear when basic rules are not followed.

Falls are a major source of disabling injuries among office workers. Back, neck, head, arm, and leg injuries are often the result of falls that can be particularly costly and produce long lasting pain and suffering.

All too often falls result when rules are broken out of expediency. For example, when a worker does not take time to get the right equipment for the job, take the necessary precaution, or leaves an object in the wrong place or position for someone to trip over. The individual who sets the stage for an accident only intended to do so momentarily. That is why it is so important for coworkers to be always vigilant and remind other workers when they are observed working in an unsafe manner or are creating hazards for themselves or others.

Fall injuries are frequently associated with slipping or tripping over:

- Desk or file drawers' electrical cords
- Loose or raised carpeting
- Stacked materials on floors and hallways
- Wet floors damaged flooring

Other causes include:

- Climbing on chairs, boxes, and other objects not intended to support the weight of a person
- Bending over and over-reaching while sitting in an unstable chair
- Unstable, flimsy, or improper footwear
- Attempting to carry or support too much weight
- Carrying or supporting weights in awkward positions
- Stairs that are dimly lit, damaged, or not equipped with handrails

Some rules to follow in preventing fall injuries:

- Require employees to wear low-heeled shoes with slip resistant heels and soles.
- Keep aisles clear of all storage.
- Always close file drawers before walking away.
- Post signs where spills have occurred and clean-up any spills and remove debris immediately permit running on premises.
- Whenever possible arrange storage to eliminate the need for using ladders or step stools.
- Store heavier items on lower or mid-level shelves.
- Make available appropriate foot stools or other low-rise ladders to facilitate reaching storage.
- Repair damaged flooring or carpeting permit power cords or extension cords to run in aisles or under carpeting.

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Provide carts for employee use when transporting equipment and supplies:

- Provide chairs with stable five-point base.
- Provide adequate lighting in stairs.
- Make sure secure handrails are provided in stairways.
- Make sure stair threads are always kept in good condition.

It is important to remember that everyone's cooperation is necessary to keep the office environment safe from fall injuries.