



# 7 Minute Safety Talks

## Walking–Working Surfaces

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Identify and minimize fall hazards.
  - Take precautions to prevent slip, trip, and fall incidents.
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### TALKING POINTS

#### 1. Identifying walking-working surface hazards.

- The Occupational Health & Safety Administration (OSHA) says that slips, trips, and falls cause the majority of general industry accidents. They cause 15 percent of all accidental deaths annually and are second only to work-related motor vehicle accidents as a cause of fatalities.
- Common hazards include:
  - Poor walking-working surface conditions, such as spills or objects on floors can cause slips or trips;
  - Ladders in poor condition or used improperly;
  - Lack of fall protection; and
  - Improperly assembled or maintained scaffolding and failure to inspect scaffolding.
- OSHA's standards for walking and working surfaces include requirements for surface conditions, designated areas, ladders, step bolts and manholes, stairways, dock-boards, scaffolds and rope descent systems, fall protection and fall protection systems, and training.

#### 2. Understand the meaning of terms such as these:

- **Designated area** – a distinct portion of a walking-working surface marked by a warning line.
- **Dockboard** – a portable or fixed device that spans a gap or compensates for a difference in elevation between a loading platform and a transport vehicle.
- **Fall hazard** – any condition that exposes an employee to a risk of harm from a fall on the same level or to a lower level.
- **Fall protection** – any equipment, device, or system that prevents an employee from falling from an elevation or lessens the effects of a fall.
- **Personal fall arrest system** – a system used to arrest an employee in a fall.
- **Personal fall protection system** – a system an employer uses to provide protection from falling or to safely arrest an employee's fall.
- **Positioning system** – a system that when used with a body harness or body belt allows an employee to be supported on a vertical surface like a wall.
- **Rope descent system** – a suspension system that allows an employee to descend in a controlled manner, as needed, stop at any point during the descent/.
- **Warning line** – a barrier put up to warn employees that they are approaching an unprotected side or edge.

#### 3. Prevent accidents caused by floor hazards.

- Keep floors clear of debris, tools, cords, and hoses, and clean up spills right away.
- Keep aisles and passageways clear of obstructions that could cause tripping hazards.
- Make sure holes and openings, manholes, etc., are covered or protected by guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall protection.
- Do not exceed the load rating limit of floors when storing materials or installing equipment.

#### 4. Take precautions when using stairs and ladders.

- Use railings going up and down the stairs, and walk one step at one time.
- Do not leave materials or tools on stairs.
- Make sure stairs are dry and well lit; report burned-out lights so that they can be replaced.
- Inspect ladders before each use, and don't use a ladder in poor condition.
- Set up ladders correctly on a stable, level surface.
- Hold on with both hands while climbing and with one hand while working on a ladder.



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### 5. Follow safety rules for use of platforms, runways, and scaffolds.

- Make sure platforms, unprotected sides, runways, hoist areas, dockboards, scaffolds, and rope descent systems are properly protected from fall hazards by guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall protection.
- Inspect scaffolds regularly, and make sure while in use, and protect against overhead hazards.
- Make sure scaffolds are capable of supporting four times the maximum intended load.
- Use wire mesh between the toeboard and guardrail if people work or pass underneath.

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### DISCUSSION

Review your walking-working surface requirements. Explain the procedure for reporting and eliminating walking-working surface hazards.

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### CONCLUSION

- Eliminating walking-working surface hazards prevents accidents.
- Slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents. Keeping working surfaces clean, dry, and uncluttered can prevent many workplace hazards.