

## **PREVENTING FALLS**

### **A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS**

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

### **DURING THE MEETING**

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

When the word "fall" is mentioned, what do you think of? Falls can cause a range of results from embarrassment to bruises, sprains, broken bones and even death.

In comedy, falls are funny; but in real life they are always potentially serious. The best strategy is to try to avoid them.

**NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:**

Use questions to start the discussion and the answers as a guide. Focus on incident that happened in your department and plant.

**Question:** What falls have occurred at work? What, if any, falling hazards are there at this facility?

**Answer:** Some examples could be slipping on a snowy surface in the parking lot, falling from a tree during tree trimming, from a ladder while painting, from a chair while standing on it instead of a ladder. Are the falls mentioned falls from one level to another or falls on the same level?

**Question:** Identify falls from one level to another. How can they be prevented?

Examples are falls from a scaffold or ladder, down steps, from a roof.

**Answer:** Falls from ladders can be prevented by:

- Using the right kind and size of ladder
- Using only a ladder in safe condition, including safety feet
- Placing the ladder properly
- Climbing correctly
- Not overreaching while working from a ladder
- Where required, tying ladder at top.

Many falls are caused by standing on boxes, benches and chairs when doing small jobs. Don't improvise--use the proper ladder.

**NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:**

Ask the group for suggestions about avoiding accidents and injuries on stairs.

**Include these points:**

- Good housekeeping on stairs means keeping them clear of objects and free of slippery materials or liquids.
- Use handrails when going upstairs or downstairs. Avoid running up or down stairs and taking two steps at a time.
- Use extreme caution when carrying materials up or down steps to avoid slipping, tripping or missing a step. Carry a small enough load to ensure visibility. Are there any other suggestions about carrying materials up and down stairs safely?
- Switch on lights to provide adequate lighting on steps. If a light is not working, report it so it will be fixed.

**Question:** What additional suggestions do you have for preventing falls from one level to another?

**NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:**

Lead discussion of working at high levels, if appropriate.

- Where personnel are working on top of equipment or on raised levels, use safety belts and lanyards. A safety net could be an alternative if a safety belt cannot be used.

**NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:**

Ask for example of falls on the same level. They could include stepping on an uneven surface, tripping over an extension cord or falls on slippery surfaces.

**How can falls on the same level be prevented?**

- Good housekeeping is the starting point. Falls result from objects left in walkways, in corridors or on floors. Aisles should be kept free of materials.
- Be careful how and where you walk: Avoid running, except in emergencies.
- Certain apparel also can contribute to falls. Worn soles and heels, high heels or untied laces can cause falls.

- Ensure walkways and other frequently used floor areas are adequately lighted.
- If lights are not working, report them so they may be fixed.
- Cables, hoses, ropes and wires should not be stretched across walkways. Where such equipment must be run along the floor, it should be straight, flat and preferably shielded.
- Floor and manhole covers should always be promptly and correctly put back in place. When they are removed, the temporary opening should be roped off, boarded over or shielded with barriers to prevent a co-worker from stepping into it.
- Immediate reporting and cleaning up of spilled liquids is an ongoing responsibility of all employees.
- Maintenance repairs or new installations are not complete until the area has been cleaned up and excess materials, used parts and debris removed.
- Avoid taking shortcuts through work areas where you might have to walk on equipment, conveyors, rollers or piles of material.
- Falls can be prevented, but it takes a concerted effort on the part of all personnel every day at work and at home.

**NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:**

Between this discussion and the next one scheduled, check out all falling hazards mentioned and have as many fixed as possible.