

DOWN AND OUT

GREEN CROSS FOR SAFETY
THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL PRESENTS
"DOWN AND OUT!"

One of the most common causes of injuries in work situations is falling. Falls are second only to auto accidents in number of fatalities. People seem to have the idea [that if they] fall, they'll be able to get up and walk away. It doesn't work that way. Falls can bring the lifelong miseries and limitations of a chronic bad back. Or the daily discomfort and insecurity of a trick knee. Or the end of wage-earning days.

When a person slips, the feet simply slide out from under. Often, as a result, the unsupported body comes crashing down. Feet can skid easily and unexpectedly in any direction, on many kinds of slimy, oily or greasy materials that can change a good surface into a dangerous one. A very small spot can do the damage. Even if there is no actual fall, a badly wrenched back may be the result.

Sometimes the feet go out from under the body because a surface moves out from under them. Balance is a critical factor in falls. Just moving from one place to another at work always involves the possibility of tripping or stumbling over an object, large or small.

Carrying something can greatly increase the risk of falling. A new balance factor is added. An uneven place in the floor. A loose tile. A protruding steel band. A small item that shouldn't be there will do the trick. And if vision is blocked by the load being carried, a fall is practically guaranteed.

Running, of course, increases the chances of a serious injury. People at work often set themselves up for a fall. A fall may result from thinking only of the task, and not how to do it. Putting pressure on some resisting object involves a key point of balance. And if the resistance suddenly changes, you can be thrown for a painful fall.

Another common way of destroying balance is overreaching. A slip of a hand in this vulnerable position means a fall for sure. Chairs, stools or other objects are often turned into small platforms to aid in reaching. And their stability is often tested beyond their limits.

Slipping, tripping or losing balance, in combination with other hazardous factors, can be doubly disastrous. A natural reflex attempt to reach out for something to hold on to can sometimes only make things worse.

Height is another complicating factor, greatly increasing the seriousness of a fall. But a fracture from falling only one step can take as long to heal as any other. On stairs, anything that can cause slipping, tripping or loss of balance becomes a bigger threat because the body is balanced on one foot most of the time. An object doesn't have to be very big or very high to cause serious trouble on stair steps.

When a standard platform or service ladder is bypassed to reach an unusual vantage point, a foot may be placed on a small or irregular surface where it can slip.

It may look like a shortcut to jump down. That's often a shortcut... to the hospital. Shortcuts that look logical often wind up in dead ends. Trying to get across that last gap in a shortcut may put a man out of work for several weeks.

If a man is wearing a safety belt attached to a suspension line, fastened to a safe support, even though near a sheer drop in space, he may be in a safer condition than a man 3 or 4 feet off the floor.

A person moving backwards who catches his heels at the edge of a platform, can be thrown over so fast his head hits first.

Ladders combine height and balance. They can produce heart-stopping scares when they move just slightly, and bone-fracturing falls when they move enough. The four-to-one angle is always the safe position for setting up a ladder. The rule is: set a straight ladder one fourth as far as the height of its support point. It's particularly important to secure ladders that are leaned against cylindrical or irregular surfaces, or set on uneven surfaces. But no matter how the ladder is set, any heavy pushing or pulling up there can lead to a painful fall.

It always takes 2 hands to go up or down a ladder safely. Heavy or clumsy material should never be hand-carried up a ladder. Sure, moving a high ladder is an effort but it is far healthier than overreaching and risking a permanent injury.

Always remember to keep your belt buckle inside the rails of the ladder you're working on, and you won't reach out too far. And remember the personal penalty can be very severe for a failure to thoroughly inspect the crucial parts of a ladder or scaffold before using it.

The best trick of all is not to fall. To some extent, it always hurts to fall. It may be only your dignity or it may be your head, your back and your paycheck that get hurt. Stay alert to this hazard. Remember how falls happen. Try to make sure that no one falls because of what you do. No one, including yourself.

GREEN CROSS FOR SAFETY
THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL
GILBERT ALTSCHUL PRODUCTIONS, INC.

Transcript: S  l  na Turquetil