



## Keep Alert - and Prevent Falls

Rarely does anything happen as quickly as a fall. During a fall, our reflexes come into play and try to protect us. Often this quick muscular reaction can cause strains or sprains and, in some cases, body tension, which may result in a more serious injury than if the body were relaxed during the fall.

Since we have no control over our reflex actions, it is wise to be aware of objects and conditions that cause falls.

Some of the most common tripping hazards, or falls at the same level, are caused by objects left lying around and low protruding pipes, lumber, drawers and tool handles. Oil, water and other liquids on walking surfaces are especially dangerous. Spills should be cleaned up immediately or absorbent material spread over the area to reduce the slipping hazard.

Beware of ice and snow in trucks, docks and construction sites and when entering or leaving the plant. Falls from one level to another frequently involve falling off ladders, docks, scaffolds and roofs, through floor openings, or down stairways, which can often result in serious injury or even death.

In order to avoid such hazards, precautionary measures must be taken. Always use an approved ladder and never overextend yourself while working on it. Check it for safety grips or tie the bottom portion. It is important that the bottom of the ladder be placed 1/4 of its vertical height away from the building. For example, if the ladder is 16 feet high, the bottom of the ladder should be 4 feet from the building. The top of the ladder should be 36 inches higher than the level at which you are working.

Keep metal ladders away from live electrical wires. Perimeter guarding should be installed around open areas where ladders are being used. Scaffolds should have guardrails and toe boards.

Stairways are meant for walking, not running. Use hand rails, and if there is not enough light, report it. Stairways are to be kept uncluttered with the treads in good shape.

Being alert is one of the surest ways to reduce injuries caused by falls. This includes being aware of our environment, personal safety, and the safety of coworkers.

