

## Preventing Slips, Trips & Falls on the Jobsite

By: Timothy Janis, Construction Safety Council

Members of IBEW Local Union 701 have reported slips, trips, and falls as a common injury sustained by workers during the past year. This trend is confirmed in OSHA reports submitted by our local contractors. Not only is working at heights the leading cause of construction fatalities annually, but it is also a factor in most recordable injuries.

When assessing the various risk factors on a jobsite, trips and falls should be a high priority, especially in environments where employees encounter leading edges. Attention should be given to floor openings that require covering and protection. In addition, beware of walking areas that may become slippery as a result of indoor spills or outdoor weather. These hazards are likely to vary from day to day and are most dangerous at doorways and ramps.

Statistically, injuries occur more frequently on “same-level” surfaces than in “above-grade” surroundings. Although the severity of harm is much greater for incidents at height, there is more exposure to a larger number of tradesmen and women who travel in high-traffic patterns daily.



Routine care and maintenance are the easiest ways to prevent slips, trips, and falls in the workplace. These include specific actions, such as:

- ✓ **Cleaning spills immediately and signaling affected areas with warning signs and barricades.**
- ✓ **Keeping walkways clear of debris and obstacles.**
- ✓ **Raising extension cords and cables or using cord covers as protectors.**
- ✓ **Installing proper lighting in working/walking areas.**
- ✓ **Storing all materials and supplies away from entryways - never on staircases and ramps.**
- ✓ **Securing floor mats, rugs, and carpets by tacking or taping them down.**
- ✓ **Spreading grease-absorbing compound on slick surfaces for better clean-up.**
- ✓ **Closing drawers on toolboxes to eliminate a trip hazard.**
- ✓ **Not blocking angles of vision when transporting loads, especially in stairways.**
- ✓ **Covering floor hole openings and protecting them with guardrails when possible.**
- ✓ **Identifying changes in floor elevation of less than six feet with warnings and barricades.**

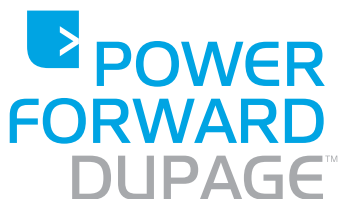
These are practical solutions that can be implemented at a low cost – and are dramatically more economical than a personal injury or human casualty. However, they do require a thoughtful and comprehensive site safety plan that anticipates such jobsite exposures. The complexity of the solution is likely equal to the severity of the risk.

But all workplaces are different. Therefore, frequent monitoring and evaluation is necessary to determine the presence of these hazards on any given day. Also required is a strong commitment by employers and employees to the safety training, equipment, and practices that will preserve the well-being of all.

The Construction Safety Council, in partnership with PowerForward DuPage, offers a monthly four-hour training program on **Fall Protection in Construction**. Enrollment is FREE for IBEW Local Union 701 members. A schedule of events is available at [www.buildsafe.org](http://www.buildsafe.org) or call 708.449.8604 to request custom delivery of this no-cost training anywhere at any time.

PowerForward DuPage and the Construction Safety Council are pleased to partner in support of this continued effort to ensure that IBEW contractors and members **Work Smart, Build Safe**.

*Timothy Janis is a Safety Training Specialist at the Construction Safety Council located in Hillside, Illinois. For more than 30 years, the Council has delivered programs and services in support of its mission to improve human safety performance through education and training. Learn more at [www.buildsafe.org](http://www.buildsafe.org).*



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The Construction Safety Council, in partnership with the NECA-IBEW 701 Safety Committee, would like to remind you to Work Smart, Build Safe!



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