

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Prevent Slips, Trips



Slips, trips and falls are one of the most common types of injuries that we experience in the agriculture industry. In fact, this is true for all types of industries. In 1999, over one million people suffered a slip, trip or fall injury, and over 17,000 Americans died as a result. The most accurate statistic for disabling injuries each year is an estimate of 3.8 million. 15 percent of these are due to slips, trips or falls and 12 to 15 percent of these account for all Workmen's Compensation costs. Direct cost for each disabling injury is about \$28,000 per person; the indirect cost is much higher at an estimate of \$48,000 per person.

There are two types of falls: same level falls and elevated falls:

~Same level - higher frequency - low severity

~Elevated level - lower frequency - higher severity

Examples of **same level falls** are the results of slippery surfaces. Some of these are caused by improper footwear. Wet and/or ice covered surfaces are very dangerous. The potential for reducing the chance of a slip or fall in this situation can be reduced by wearing good foot wear with soft rubber soles and heels and cleated bottoms to enhance more traction. Obviously, keeping flat surfaces clear of clutter will provide a safer environment for walking.

Elevated falls occur less frequently, but normally result in more serious injuries. Examples of these are ladders, which can result from careless positioning of the ladder or, in the case of farm equipment, failing to check the safety of locking latches on harvesting equipment or mud and debris on the ladder steps, which will enhance the potential for a slip and fall.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL:

According to the NSC, there are 110,000 injuries each year to the feet and toes of U.S. workers, which represents 19% of all disabling injuries. The most important protection you can have in our agricultural environment is safe and reliable footwear with the traits that NSC recommends:

- The soles and heels should be slip-resistant.
- The toe of the shoe or boot should resist crushing injuries.
- The shoe should support the ankle.

TIPS ON HOW TO FALL:

All of our endeavors are geared to not falling at all. However, that possibility always exists. Following are some tips that can help you reduce the magnitude of a fall.

- Tuck your chin in, turn your head, and throw up an arm to help break the impact of a fall.
- While falling, twist or roll your body to the side. Landing on your buttocks and side is better than directly on your back.
- Keep your wrists, elbows and knees bent. Do not try to break your fall with your hands and elbows. The idea of breaking a fall is to have as much of your body spread out as possible, which will spread the impact of the fall.

ACTUAL EXAMPLES OF SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS:

Slip, trip, and fall accidents have the same traits as other accidents in that we always think that it can't happen to us, but to the other person. We know that this isn't true. It can happen to anyone no matter how many safety meetings, seminars or newsletters we do on safety. So long as the human element is involved, the potential for an incident is always there. Our endeavor with safety consciousness is to reduce the potential of an incident. Following are some actual incidents identifying what can happen with a slip, trip or fall:

- A young, inexperienced farm worker was returning to the hay mower, tripped over baler twine and fell through a "dropdown" hole to the concrete floor below. He broke several bones and missed work for several weeks.
- This gentleman had put in an extremely long day in the field. He turned the tractor engine off and jumped from the platform to the ground. Guess what? He twisted his ankle and spent a couple of months on crutches, just trying to save a little time.
- A maintenance man had been repairing the hydraulic system on a tractor. He spilled hydraulic fluid on the shop floor. He failed to put absorbent on the floor. Another employee walked over the fluid slick, slipped, and fell, cutting his head on the corner of a work bench.
- Freezing rain has knocked out power; a farmer is using a PTO generator to provide light for his barn. While he is checking the equipment, he slips on a patch of ice, falls onto the PTO shaft, which results in a fatal accident.
- Locally, a couple of years ago, we had an employee on a combine who had stopped to ask a fellow employee to reposition the bean truck for better loading access. He leaned over the ladder, which was folded up, but improperly latched. He fell to the ground, twisted a knee and was semi-mobile for a couple of months.

ELIMINATE HAZARDS:

- Keep aisles, stairs, walkways clear of clutter and debris.
- Use handrails, handholds and steps to mount and dismount equipment. **Practice the 3-point system- keep 2 hands and 1 foot or 1 hand and 2 feet on the machine at all times.**
- The seat is on equipment to operate or drive. Use it! Some folks like to stand up and try to drive.
- When you shut down a piece of equipment, remove the key and stick it in your pocket before making repairs of adjustments.
- Be doubly careful around stationary equipment and maintain good footing. Keep away at a safe distance while the equipment is running.