



## Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls in the Workplace



# Falls **cause deaths and critical injuries**

Every year, about 20 people die due to falls in Ontario workplaces. For example:

- A worker fell from a roof.
- Another slipped and fell hitting his head on a concrete floor.
- A worker fell 15 feet from a ladder.

Each of these workers' families lost a spouse, brother, sister, son, daughter or parent as a result of the fall.

Other workers suffered critical injuries such as broken limbs, cracked ribs and head injuries.

The following are some real instances of how workers fell:

- tripped over a hose on the floor
- fell from a lift truck
- fell off a loading dock
- fell off a stool, off a vehicle, and off a ladder.

Unfortunately, slips, trips and falls continue to happen every day.

## Did you know that...

- Each year there are about 17,000 lost time injuries due to falls in the workplace.
- "Same level falls" like slips and trips account for 65% of all fall-related injuries.
- Falls from heights that range from a few centimetres to 120 stories account for 34% of fall-related injuries – and many of the work-related deaths that occur in Ontario.

## Who's falling?

Anyone – in any workplace – can fall.

1 in 5 lost time injuries result from falls

80 workers are injured every day because of a fall – that's 1 every 20 minutes.

## Why are people falling?

Despite prevention efforts, workers fall at work because:

- working conditions such as poor lighting, slippery walking surfaces, and poor house-keeping practices exist
- protective devices like guard rails are missing
- equipment like ladders and scaffolds are in poor condition or not used properly
- fall protection equipment is not available, not used or misused
- work practices are poor. For example, unclear job procedures, lack of training for workers, or workers rushing to meet deadlines.

## What do falls cost?

The average WSIB claim costs are \$11,771.

When you factor in all other costs such as staff replacement, lost productivity and equipment damages, the costs skyrocket. The estimated actual cost to your company can be as much as four times the claim costs – approximately \$59,000 per injury.

What would you have to generate in additional sales or services to recover this lost profit?

Profit margin	Sales/services required to recover the total cost of one injury
5%	\$1,180,000
10%	\$590,000

## How can you, as an employer, prevent falls?

- Put a company policy in place that outlines the rules for housekeeping, lighting, and inspections.
- Make sure that personal protective equipment and other equipment is in good repair and is used properly.
- Supervisors must be clear about their responsibilities – they must ensure that the rules are followed.
- Make sure that your employees know and understand the rules. Provide training on how to clean up spills, use fall protection equipment, how to put up guard rails and use covers on holes in the floor, etc.
- Continuously check to make sure that company rules are being followed. Are they working? What needs improvement?
- If you have an incident in your workplace, investigate immediately and eliminate the cause.

## What should you, as an employee, do?

- Understand and follow your company policy/rules.
- Be aware of fall hazards and report them to a supervisor right away.
- Take the time needed to do the job properly. Do not take shortcuts.

## Know and follow the law

- Occupational health and safety laws require employers to take every reasonable precaution to protect workers, provide information and instruction, and to ensure that workers properly use or wear the required equipment.
- Employers, supervisors and workers can be prosecuted for not complying with the law:
  - A roofing contractor was fined \$10,000 and jailed for 90 days when a worker fell 21 feet without fall arrest equipment.
  - Another company was fined \$100,000 when a worker fell from an unstable ladder and died as a result of his injuries.

## Who can help?

### Health & Safety Associations

Most workplaces registered with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) are assigned to a health and safety association. They can help you with:

- falls prevention programs
- falls prevention training
- general information
- best practices in falls prevention

Visit [www.preventiondynamics.com](http://www.preventiondynamics.com) for training information and materials, and consulting services offered by Ontario's Health and Safety Associations and Partners.

### Government

The Ontario Ministry of Labour ([www.gov.on.ca/lab](http://www.gov.on.ca/lab)) or Human Resources Development Canada, Labour Program ([www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca](http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca)) can help you understand the law and help you reinforce the law's requirements.

See the blue pages of your local phone book for your local government offices or visit the web sites listed above.

### Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

The WSIB can help you analyse your injury record to determine your claims costs, and then develop a prevention strategy based on your past experience. Call 1-800-663-6639 for more information.

### Other helpful web sites:

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety [www.ccohs.ca](http://www.ccohs.ca)

Occupational Health and Safety for Everyone [www.oshforeveryone.org](http://www.oshforeveryone.org)

Work Smart Ontario [www.worksmartontario.ca](http://www.worksmartontario.ca)



Safety starts with you

[www.wsib.on.ca](http://www.wsib.on.ca)