



PREVENTING

slips and falls in transportation

In the trucking industry, slips and falls are all-too common. Whether the injured worker is a driver who slips while climbing in or out of the truck, or a loading-dock worker who slips while unloading the truck, the slip often results in a broken bone or worse. Fractures are one of the most common injuries, and one that usually leaves the worker unable to work and the employer scrambling to fill a gap.

Transportation workers face a number of slip and trip hazards depending on the type of work they do. According to statistics from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the bulk of the fractures in IHSA's member industries are suffered by truck drivers, loading-dock workers, homebuilders, and lumber-yard workers.

The importance of three-point contact

When truck drivers slip, it's usually because they didn't use three-point contact when they were getting in or out of the cab. It's a simple rule that often gets forgotten. When getting in or out of any vehicle, drivers should keep one hand and two feet, or two hands and one foot on the truck while climbing up or down.

The three-point contact system can significantly reduce the chances of injuring yourself through a slip or fall while climbing ladders or while entering or exiting a vehicle. The three-point contact system says that three of your four limbs should always be in contact with the ladder or vehicle. That can be either

one hand and two feet, or two hands and one foot—only one limb is in motion at any one time. In addition to maintaining three-point contact, remind your workers of the following rules:

- Check the ground below for obstacles (e.g., tools, materials, a spill) before getting out.
- Never climb down with something in your free hand. Instead, put it on the vehicle floor and reach for it when you get down to the ground.
- After a long run, climb out of the cab slowly to avoid pulling a muscle.
- Face the cab when getting in or out.
- Grip the rails and handles firmly.
- Never use the door frame or edge of the door as a handle when you climb down.
- Never use the tires or wheel hubs as steps.
- Wear shoes with good support and good grips (never sandals or bare feet).
- Be extra cautious in bad weather (e.g., rain or snow).

Avoid getting hit

Next to falls, the most common way workers in the trucking industry end up with fractures is by being hit or struck. Review the following tips with your workers to help prevent them from getting hit:

- When opening the trailer doors of a truck, open one door first, keeping control of it while it opens, and step off to the side. If the load has shifted during transport, that will prevent the door from

swinging open and hitting you or other people nearby. It also keeps you from being hit by any material that may fall out of the truck.

- Always wear a safety vest to make yourself visible to other drivers. Safety vests are legally required in areas where there are moving vehicles.
- Before you remove a load from a trailer, make sure it's stable and that it hasn't shifted.
- Ensure no workers are in the trailer when the lift truck operator is using the lift truck in the trailer.
- Make sure the work area is well lit so that drivers and loading-dock workers can see clearly.

Secured loads

- Removing material from a flatbed requires some special attention. If the load is secured by straps, stand to one side of the flatbed when you disengage the ratcheting system. This will prevent the bar from striking you if it kicks back.
- If the load is secured by chains, stand to one side when you remove the wire from the load binder.
- When you release the straps or chains, always stand near the secure part of the load. This reduces the risk of something falling off the truck and hitting you.

Use these tips in your next safety talk to help reduce the number of workers who suffer fractures in the trucking industry.

Unloading flatbeds

When unloading flatbeds, remind your workers to

- check that their boots don't have mud, snow, ice, grease, or anything else on them
- ensure the runningboard, tread, step, foothold, and platform are clean and dry before stepping on them
- have a firm grip before stepping up
- place their foot securely on the step before stepping up
- always be aware of their surroundings.



Metal can become much more slippery than other materials such as wood or concrete. When metal dock boards or ramps get wet with water, mud, or grease, they can be very dangerous. So, remind your workers to be careful on metal surfaces. It's also important to remember never to jump to the ground since it could be slippery or uneven.

Falls from loading docks

Loading docks and ramps are dangerous places. They are frequently crowded, heavy-traffic areas, and the working and walking surfaces are often wet. Metal dock plates can wear smooth and become very slippery. The edge of a dock plate in particular invites trips and falls.

Stepping backward accidentally can result in a fall from the dock. Many dangerous falls could be

prevented by portable railings, which can easily be installed at the edge of the dock. They are removed when a truck or tractor is at the dock, and replaced as soon as the truck or tractor leaves.

Proper housekeeping, well-designed traffic patterns, and the use of abrasive, skid-resistant surface coatings will reduce the risk of slips, trips, and falls.

Ramps and gangplanks present hazards similar to those of loading docks. The slopes should be as gradual as possible, as wide as possible, and as dry as possible. They should also have skid-resistant surfaces.

Footwear

No footwear has anti-slip properties for every condition, so make sure that the proper type of footwear is selected for the work conditions and for the

type of flooring or walking/working surface.

Working in transportation may present many different types of slip and trip hazards for workers. The key to maintaining a safe workplace is to be aware of those hazards and know how to deal with them.