



SAFETY ADVISOR

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Slips, Trips and Falls Revisited: Workplace Safety Basics

By Keith Myhre

Central Office, FDOT Occupational Safety and Health Programs

On a recent, weekly Saturday trip to a large commercial lumber and hardware supply center, I became distracted at the number of obstacles on the floor, to a point where I began playing a game of, “How many trip and fall hazards can I spot while I’m shopping?” This game distracted me from getting the supplies and getting back home in a timely manner as I pushed myself for finding more down each aisle. However, it forced me to transfer this sight of a dangerous and neglected obstacle course to being diligent at work and home. In our new world of cardboard box inundation, we encounter many sources of slipping, tripping, and falling.

To begin with some telling numbers, in the past three years, the FDOT slips, trips and falls injuries are nearly 30% of all reported injuries statewide. In 2023, the occurrence of slips, trips, falls injuries remains at nearly 30%, with two months left on our calendar.

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Slips, Trips and Falls Revisited: *continued*

Nationally, OSHA reports, 80% of the lost days of work are related to injuries caused from slips, trip, and falls. There are multiple causes that can be attributed to this. But to be practical, our most useful tool to combat these numbers is our eyes. For example, in our present times, when opening the front door, we should be in a habit of immediately looking down and expecting a box to be right in our path of walking. Just as in the lumber store, we don't have much control over how other people leave items in our pathways, but we can train our minds to expect obstacles. Thereby our new diligence in *observation* can help us in the long run to minimize our injuries.

These are a few general questions to ask yourself while reviewing your daily work activities. Is the lighting sufficient for you to walk or work in areas? Does your job require the occasional or frequent use of a stool, ladder, or scaffolding? Quite often, an office chair with wheels is used in place of a standard foot stool. This scenario gives a person no confidence in the safe retrieval of reaching elevated items. Texting while walking won't minimize these incidents either!



Avoiding slipping and slipping injuries again takes a watchful eye and a “what to expect in our surroundings” mindset. Tile, linoleum, and concrete floors present a slipping danger when wet. Regardless of carelessness, plumbing leaks, condensation, or rain, an eye for your location is critical to your personal safety. And attention to spill response whether with a mop, sand, or a wet floor sign will aid in the personal safety for others. When identifying a slipping area, remove the material or mark it to alert others of the hazard. ***Let's bring these avoidable injuries down!***

Did You Know?

Nighttime Pedestrian Visibility and Your Personal Life Safety

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Toward our target of zero fatalities and serious injuries on Florida's roadways, in 2016 FDOT embarked upon a 5-year, \$100M statewide initiative to improve nighttime visibility of pedestrians with lighting at over 2,000 intersections! This is just one great example of the great work our agency does to provide safe transportation infrastructure. Safe road user behavior is important as well!

Are you one of those people who are out on the streets of our communities, walking, running or a combination of both? If your answer is, "yes," then I'm right there with you. My next question is, are you proactive in making yourself visible to drivers? Especially now, with the recent time change and our quickly disappearing daylight. Upon my third time getting hit by a driver, it made me wonder if there is something I should be improving on!

During your next drive, take notice of the pedestrians. Some color choices of clothing make pedestrians blend in with nature, like camouflage. Considering drivers may not be in a habit of looking for pedestrians, my new calling is to stop and address my neighbors on the road, making them aware that early mornings and early evenings they become, "*The Invisible Man.*"

Wearing reflective or high visibility hats and clothing, or wearable lights are essential in being visible to drivers. Even with new bright attire, one must remain aware of moving traffic near you. Don't follow in the footsteps of my youth, personal encounters with vehicles don't get easier with each occurrence.



Ergonomics in the Workplace

By Keith Myhre

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Over the next few months, the Safety Office will begin examining key principles of ergonomics and, specifically, the importance of this in our workplace. I believe it is worthwhile to periodically step back and review your physical movements pertaining to your work activities. These may be outdoors, in a machine shop, or in an office setting.

Looking at the way our bodies may be adversely affected by vibrations, repetitive movements, lifting, pushing or even your posture in an office chair. Long-term, poor posture or repetitive movements often result in an injury that has long lasting effects. These are known as musculoskeletal disorders or MSD's. MSD's affect muscles, nerves, ligaments, tendons, and blood vessels. The three primary risk factors are: force, awkward posture, and repetitive movement.

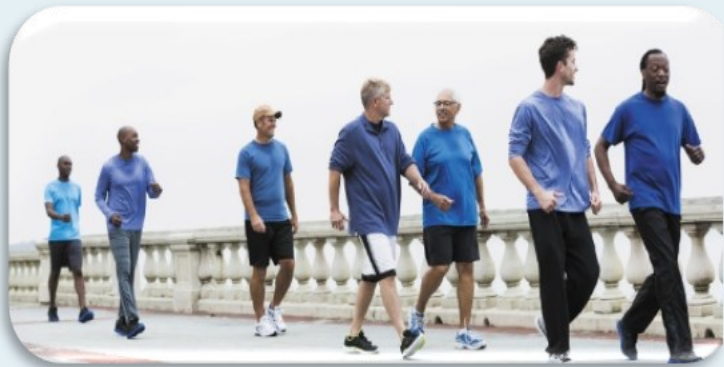
For example, my wife is a professional photographer. In her 20 plus year career, she often has an eight-pound camera held in her right hand for hours at a time. And, if there is an extended lens on that camera, the weight increases to 13 pounds. Then, there are the constant wrist rotations and twisting of the right hand over and over. Day after day and year after year it takes a toll. One might think, "it's just a camera," but the body's posture in the way this weight is suspended over time and repetition is what leads to slow building injuries. Her wrist became the pivoting point for moving 13 pounds daily. Eventually those repetitive motions appeared as an MSD.

If we knew there would be a problem, we would have corrected it on the spot. With an MSD, we are not aware of the injury progression until the pain appears. By that time, it requires time to diagnose the problem, how it occurred, how it is corrected and then the time in rehabilitating the injury.

Ergonomic Key: Every person is responsible for an ongoing evaluation of their workspaces and work activities to evaluate potentially unhealthy habits of body mechanics and posture.

Ergonomics in the Workplace: This Month's Focus: Sitting

It is not something new to hear that sitting for prolonged periods of time does not help your overall health. Whether sitting in an office or in a vehicle, every 30 minutes should be a time for "recess." Standing up, quick stretching, walking a flight of stairs, or to the outside and back in. Anything to keep your body moving. With alarms on our phones and watches, it's easy to set a 30-minute timer. The key is not feeling like one needs to go run a 5K, but to use your legs to push out of the chair and move around to keep active. This type of repetition is critical for enjoying life longer. For those whose mobility is restricted, raised arm circles or lateral arm raises for your exercise recess. It's all part of keeping healthy!



The Safety Advisor is distributed electronically to all FDOT staff monthly, to promote indoor and outdoor workplace safety and generate an overall awareness for safety in our lives. It is produced monthly by the State Safety Office in Tallahassee, Florida.

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See Department safety information at: <https://www.fdot.gov/safety>

Anonymously report hazards in your workplace: (850) 414-5255

