

# Walking/Working Surfaces

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Slips and falls on walking and working surfaces are a major source of workplace accidents. Elevated platforms, runways, ladder rungs, stairs, steps, scaffolds and outdoor areas are commonly overlooked walking and working surfaces. Wear shoes with soles suitable to working conditions.

## Housekeeping

Housekeeping is an important factor in all work environments and plays a vital role in maintaining a safe workplace. Keeping walking and working surfaces tidy can prevent people from slipping, tripping or falling due to clutter or slick surfaces.

## Walkways and Floors

Keep aisles clear and in good repair. Aisles should be sufficiently wide where mechanical handling equipment is used. Use covers or guardrails to protect personnel from the hazards of:

- Open pits
- Tanks
- Vats
- Ditches

## Floor Loading Protection

Do not place a load on the floor or roof of a building or other structure if the load is heavier than the load rating limit. Check with your supervisor if you are concerned about heavy loads that you need to place in or carry through an area.

## Ladders and Steps

### Portable Ladders

Maintain ladders in good condition. Inspect ladders frequently and before each use, and withdraw them from service if they have defects.

- Tag or mark defective ladders as “Dangerous, Do Not Use”

Place ladders on level, solid ground unless you secure or stabilize them to prevent accidental displacement. Secure any ladder that must be placed on a slippery surface. If you use a ladder to access a roof or other area, make sure it extends at least 3 feet (0.9 meter) above the point of support.

When climbing or descending a ladder:

- Face the ladder
- Keep both hands on the ladder
- Do not carry objects that can interfere with your ability to grasp the ladder
- Remember that the top of a regular stepladder is not safe for standing

### Fixed Ladders

It's common to find cages and wells on tall ladders, but these protections are often ineffective at stopping falls. Newer ladders have systems that stop or prevent falls. A ladder safety device is any device, other than a cage or well, designed to eliminate or reduce accidental falls and may incorporate such features as friction brakes and sliding attachments. Landing platforms provide a means of interrupting a free fall and serve as a resting place during long climbs.

### **Step Bolts and Manhole Steps**

- Step bolts and manhole steps must be uniformly spaced and in good condition
- Do not exceed the maximum intended load
- Inspect each step visually before use; report any issues, such as a bent or missing step, or if you slip or lose your grip

### **Stairs and Steps**

Standard stairs provide access from one walking-working surface to another when operations necessitate regular and routine travel between levels, including access to operating platforms for equipment. When using stairs and steps:

- Keep a clear view of your footing
- Make sure you have good lighting so you can easily see the next step
- Keep a hand free to grab the stair railing if you lose your footing
- Don't carry anything that keeps you from seeing the next steps
- Know that wet or slippery shoes are as dangerous as a wet or slippery surface

### **Scaffolds**

- Follow the specific safety guidelines for the type of scaffold you use
- The footing or anchorage for scaffolds or planks must be sound, rigid and capable of carrying the maximum intended load without settling or displacement
- Maintain scaffolds in a safe condition; do not use damaged or weakened scaffolds
- Do not alter or move scaffolds while they are in use or occupied
- Install guardrails, midrails and toeboards on all open sides and ends of platforms more than 10 feet (3 meters) above the ground or floor; install wire mesh between the toeboard and the guardrail along the entire opening where persons are required to work or pass under the scaffolds

### **Dock boards and Ramps**

- Secure loading ramps and dock boards (bridge plates) to prevent slipping
- Newer dock boards have raised edges on the sides to prevent accidental runoff
- Use handholds on portable dock boards to permit safe handling when the dock board must be repositioned or relocated

### **Falls and Falling Objects**

Open-sided work platforms and surfaces present a risk of falls to lower levels or falls onto or into dangerous equipment. Prevent or stop falls with:

- Guardrails
- Work positioning
- Restraint systems
- Safety nets
- Personal fall arrest systems