



We've all heard this many times, but it's so easy to get distracted and not pay attention to where we are going or what we are doing. **This is how slips, trips, and falls occur.**

Falls are one of the leading causes of injury in the construction workplace. While the most catastrophic of these occur when working from heights, believe it or not, many injuries also happen at the ground level, and many of these accidents occur when walking across uneven ground that is too hard, too soft, wet, or muddy.

Twisted ankles, knee strains, and back injuries are the most common injuries, but depending on how a person falls, so are fractured wrists and muscle tears.

What your employees need to know:

- **Distractions rank high on the list of injury causes.**
- **Stay focused while navigating uneven ground.** If someone is carrying a piece of equipment, and is startled by a loud noise, moving too fast, or even talking with a co-worker, their focus can switch away from the ground conditions.
- **Slowing down when the ground is soft or wet** is a common practice for people who work on dirt or grass. However, conditions can be just as dangerous after the ground has dried out following rainfall.
- **If heavy machinery moved through the area when the ground was wet**, large tire tracks may have been left behind. When the ground dries, these tracks harden leaving deep ruts. These ruts pose a serious trip hazard. Not only that, if someone does trip over one and fall, they are at

risk of further injury as they will likely land on the same deep, hardened ruts.

What your employees need to do:

- **Eliminate the distractions as much as possible.** As mentioned above, walking at a speed appropriate for the conditions is a must.
- **Avoid distractions, such as carrying tools or equipment with you.** Perhaps these items can be transported on one of the site vehicles in the area.

Survey the jobsite each day in order to identify problem areas to be aware of or avoid. This includes:

- Identifying the ruts, slippery conditions, and other uneven ground on the worksite.
- **Identifying holes and trenches on the site.** Cover them and/or rope them off with caution tape to prevent access to the area.
- Keeping shoe and boot tread clean to provide better traction.
- **Do not take shortcuts** through debris piles.
- Make sure walkways and **areas around ladders** are always kept clear of tools or debris.
- **Pay close attention to placement of cords and hoses** as these can also create tripping hazards.

Remember:

Discuss with your employees how being distracted increases the risk of injury and strategize on how best to avoid those distractions.

Discuss the ground conditions you will be working with and seek out ideas on how best to avoid the hazards created by those conditions.

Identify an obvious hazard – such as slippery conditions or a deep rut caused by heavy machinery – and demonstrate the risks involved and how to navigate these areas.

Emphasize the importance of keeping shoe and boot soles clean. Provide a tool such as a small brush or even a stick where workers can easily clean off the dirt or mud while in the field.

Remind employees to report any unsafe conditions.

Practice good housekeeping: if you drop it, pick it up. Return all tools, hoses, and cords to their proper location.

By taking the extra time to avoid distractions, surveying the ground conditions, and identifying different safety hazards, your employees will get in the habit of looking for trouble spots and avoiding them.