

# **WATCH YOUR STEP!! DON'T SLIP & FALL**

*by Charlie Kittleson*

Slips and falls are one of the most frequent causes of accidents, both on and off the job. Each year in the United States, more than 300,000 people suffer disabling injuries from falls. Slips and falls can be fatal as well; they rank second only to automobile accidents, causing nearly 12,000 deaths a year. To avoid getting hurt from falls, avoid rushing and remember the following:

## **WATCH WHERE YOU WALK**

Be aware of where you are walking. Look down continuously for spilled liquids, materials, equipment, changing surface levels, etc. Make sure the area is well-lit or use a flashlight if lighting is poor.

## **WEAR PROPER FOOTWEAR**

Make sure your shoes are in good shape and correct for the job. Discard worn-out shoes with smooth soles and other defects. If conditions are wet and slippery, wear non-slip shoes or boots. Avoid footwear with leather soles which have poor floor traction—especially on smooth surfaces.

## **CHECK FLOOR OPENINGS**

Avoid unguarded floor openings. On construction sites, when covers are placed over floor openings, avoid walking on the cover unless it is absolutely secure and will not move or collapse. Never jump over pits or other openings.

## **BE CAREFUL ON STAIRS**

Do not run when going up or down stairs. Check to see that stair treads are in good shape, with no obstructions on the steps. Always use the hand railings that are provided. Avoid carrying large loads when going up or down stairs and ensure that stairs are well-lit.

## **USE LADDERS CORRECTLY**

Never use broken or defective ladders. Set the angle of the ladder at the proper four-to-one ratio (height to width angle). Make sure the ladder is on solid footing and will not move when you climb upon it. Whenever possible, tie your ladder to the structure to improve stability. Anchorage at the bottom is also a good idea. Never stand on the top two steps of a step ladder.

## **MAKE SURE SCAFFOLDING IS SAFE TO USE**

When working on scaffolding, make sure it is secure, stable and properly set-up.

Do not work on scaffolding if guard rails are missing or the base is unstable. Check to see that planks are in good shape and not cracked. Tall scaffolds should be tied into a structure to increase stability.

## **DON'T JUMP OUT OF VEHICLES**

Never jump from equipment or vehicles. Use the handrail and steps provided, remembering the “three point rule.” Avoid stepping onto loose rocks, slippery surfaces, oil spills, etc.

**Watch your step and don't trip yourself up! Remember, Gravity Always Wins!**