



Southwest Washington Workers'  
Compensation Trust

## Falls Are Not Funny!

Injuries from slips, trips, and falls, continue to be the most prevalent injuries school employees experience. Most falls occur on the same level and are caused by tripping over an obstacle or slipping on something. People can fall after tripping on cords, backpacks, carpets, curbs, holes in the ground or even students. Falls also occur frequently when people walk up or down stairs, slip on spills left on the floor or slip during wet, snowy or icy conditions.

Injuries from slips, trips and falls can be serious. They can range from short term embarrassment to a lifetime of pain and physical therapy. You might recall a friend or co-worker that has been injured by falling. Maybe you have fallen at home or while at work.

Here are some ways to prevent slips, trips and falls.

- Keep walkways and floors free of obstacles such as boxes, cords, backpacks and litter.
- Use your arms for balance. Don't carry too much.
- Make sure you can see over or around any load you are carrying.
- Close cabinet drawers and doors as soon as you are through with them. Many serious injuries have occurred when people fall over an open drawer.
- Don't walk too fast or run.
- Adjust your walking speed and style to the surface you are traveling on. If the surface is rough, cluttered, slippery or at an angle, slow down and take small, careful steps.
- Expect icy and hazardous conditions in the winter.
- If the longer way into the building has been cleared, use it, even if it takes a few extra steps.
- Wear safe footwear, with low heels and a good fit. Avoid slippery soles and wear shoes with adequate tread when walking on icy or wet surfaces.
- Take your near-misses seriously. Even if you are not injured you should take the time to investigate why the near-accident occurred. Identify what can be done to prevent it from happening again.
- If you see a hazard that you can't fix, report it to your supervisor so it can be repaired as soon as possible.
- Don't stand on desks or chairs. They are not designed for that purpose and teachers fall from them regularly and get injured.

**Protect yourself. Falling is serious and the injuries that result can be severe.**