

Safety Talks



FALLS HURT! USE THE HANDRAILS

For Near-Miss Nancy, going up and down stairs is a part of her daily routine. She doesn't give it much thought because it has become so repetitive. Nancy needs to remain vigilant because however harmless stairs may seem, they are an area with a serious risk of injury from slips, trips and falls.

USING STAIRS SAFELY

The primary cause of stairwell slips and falls is the loss of balance. Sam suggests Nancy should:

- Slow down going up or down stairs. Ensure a firm footing on each tread before taking the next step.
- Use the handrail to help maintain balance.
- Take each step one at a time making sure her lead foot is firmly planted before putting her weight on it.
- Keep her eyes on the path. Distractions such as reading, using your cell phone or talking with a colleague can cause missteps.
- Ascend and descend one stair at a time. Don't "stair hop."
- Avoid carrying large items that block her vision or heavy items that require both hands. Instead, Nancy should carry smaller loads and take more trips.
- Wear proper footwear. High heels, flip flops and slides can impede balance while climbing stairs.



STAIR MAINTENANCE

- Proper maintenance of outdoor stairs and ramps is important for slip and fall prevention. Accumulation of ice, snow and rainwater on outdoor steps and ramps can reduce proper footing. Inspect stairs frequently and clear away new accumulations as soon as practical.
- Eliminate slip and trip hazards on stairs such as slick wax, unattached or rolled carpet and clutter. High-traction tape may be used to enhance the coefficient of friction on treads. Specialty nonslip wax and other edgings are also viable options to improve traction on stairs.
- Spills, wet spots, or any debris should be immediately cleaned up.
- Some schools have painted the edges of stairs with a bright yellow paint in order to increase the contrast of the steps with the surrounding areas.
- Stairwells should be well-lit to ensure good visibility. Burnt out bulbs or under illuminated fixtures should be replaced immediately.

Safety

Sam says

outside

wooden or

aluminum ramps can

be very slippery

when wet, icy or

snowy. He suggests

installing traction

strips or some

other slip-resistant

treatment on the

walking surface.

