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## Stairway Safety

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# Supervising Safety Newsletter

Stairways are a very common walking surface employees are exposed to every day at IPSC. Falls from stairs may lead to serious injuries or even death. As an employer, IPSC must take measures in the workplace to protect employees from slip, trip, and fall hazards on any walking/working surface. Employees have the responsibility to use stairways correctly. This topic is focused on how a stairway should be constructed and the proper use to prevent potential falls.

**OSHA General Industry Standard 1910.135(b)(11)(i)** states that "the employer must ensure each employee exposed to an unprotected side or edge of a stairway landing that is 4 feet (1.2 m) or more above a lower level is protected by a guardrail or stair rail system."

Stairways typically consist of a landing platform, a handrail or stair rail system, and steps or risers.

- Each flight of stairs having at least 3 treads and at least 4 risers must be equipped with stair rail systems and handrails.
- Except for the entrance, stairway floor openings must be guarded by a standard railing on all exposed sides.
- Platform landings on stairways must be free of obstructions such as accumulation of debris, materials, and trash. The door or gate opening up onto a platform of stairway must open freely and not present a tripping hazard.

All employees should take the following precautions when stairways are used in the workplace.

- Always use handrails when ascending or descending any stairway.
- Be cautious of environmental conditions such as ice, snow, or rain accumulation that may build up on the steps of stairways.
- Stairs must be kept clean and free of trash, debris, and anything that could cause the steps to be slippery.
- Never use stairways or landings as a storage place, even temporarily.



- Only take one step at a time when ascending or descending the stairway.

Employers are responsible for ensuring workplace stairways are safe. Employees should alert management to any unsafe issues or potential hazards noticed on or near stairways.

- Inspect stairways for irregularities such as missing steps, loose handrails, corrosion, holes, grease, spills, or loose rugs.
- Watch for opening doors on platforms of stairways.
- Ensure there is adequate lighting in stairways.

The majority of stairway workplace incidents occur when an employee is not paying attention.

Never carry a load with both hands while going up or down the stairs. This is dangerous for many reasons:

- Your attention is focused on balancing the load.
- Your vision is blocked and you can't see the stairs in front of you.
- Your hands are too full to grip a handrail.

Other precautions to be aware of include:

- Make sure your shoes are tied before using any stairway.
- When walking with others, set a good example by walking up and down the stairs carefully while using the handrail.
- Report or clean up spills or trash found on the stairs.
- Report any situation in which there is insufficient lighting provided on any workplace stairway, either indoors or outdoors.
- Never run up or down the stairs, and avoid distractions like reading a newspaper or looking at your cell phone.

Just because walking up and down the stairs seems basic, don't assume that it won't be you who falls. Slips, trips, and falls happen every day on workplace stairways and we all need to be mindful about the potential hazards that can be found when using the stairs.