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Tool Box Topic: 3 Points of Contact Slips Trips and Falls

Slips trips and falls account for 20 percent of work injuries.

3 Points of Contact:

Climbing into and out of mobile equipment presents a common exposure to slips and falls. Inclement weather, greasy or broken steps, grab handles and the rush of the work day make this a serious exposure.

The three-point technique is a simple and effective way to minimize the risk of falling. Use this technique if you are entering the cab of a forklift, climbing onto the bed of a truck or climbing into/onto any other piece of equipment. When you are climbing, at least three limbs should always be in contact with the equipment. This could be two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand. Of course, to use this technique the climber must be facing the equipment. You cannot have three points of contact if you are jumping off or sliding out of the seat.

Before you enter the equipment, place any objects on the seat – log books, production schedules, bar-code scanners, etc. Do the same when you exit. Leave the objects on the seat until you are off the equipment. In addition, make sure you look before you exit.

Other points to remember, include:

- Wear footwear appropriate to the job;
- Keep the steps and grab rails clean;
- Make sure the lights are working so you can see where you are climbing;
- Do not use the steering wheel or control handles as handholds.

Most slip and fall injuries are minor. However, a fall could be the cause of a more serious internal injury as well. Old habits are hard to break, but properly climbing onto and off of mobile equipment may prevent you from becoming a slip and fall statistic.

Falling while getting into or out of heavy equipment, a truck or tractor cab, hooking up air and electrical lines, or mounting or dismounting trailers is a sure way to get seriously hurt. An insurance industry study showed that falls from vehicles produced injuries that were almost 25% worse than other types of injuries.

Even an ankle sprain can play havoc with your ability to use the clutch. Minor injuries can cost you big in terms of lost income and downtime. The biggest single cause of falls from a vehicle is driver error and failure to follow the THREE-POINT rule.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID FALLS?

No matter what type of access system your vehicle has available, use the THREE-POINT system to significantly reduce the chance of a slip or fall. The THREE-POINT system means three of your four limbs are in contact with the vehicle at all times—two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.

The THREE-POINT system allows a person to have maximum stability and support, thereby reducing the likelihood of slipping and falling. Be a winner; use the THREE-POINT system.

DO'S:

- Wear shoes with good support -- not sandals, bare feet or high heels.
- Exit and enter facing the cab.
- Slow down and use extra caution in bad weather.
- Get a firm grip on rails or handles with your hands.
- Look for obstacles on the ground below before exiting.

DON'Ts:

- Don't climb down with something in your free hand. Put it on the vehicle floor and reach up for it when you get down on the ground.
- Don't rush to climb out after a long run. Descend slowly, to avoid straining a muscle.
- Don't ever jump out. You may land off balance or on an uneven surface, and fall.
- Don't use tires or wheel hubs as a step surface.
- Don't use the door frame or door edge as a handhold.
- Don't become an injury statistic.

The professional driver or operator knows all the do's and don'ts of getting in and out of vehicles and practices the Three Point Rule every day.

Slips, Trips, Falls

In the depot and office space, key points to take note of; remove, or move objects to a safer area that may cause a slip, trip or fall. If you can't remove it, report it.

Always use a handrail when walking up and down stairs.

Keep your office or workspace tidy; plan your work. Ensure you have adequate space before lifting items to load into your van. Avoid stepping over freight or pallets as this increases the risk of a trip or fall.