

Southern California Trade Contractors Association, Inc.

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

CARELESSNESS



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CONSTRUCTION SAFETY - BUILDING STAIRWAYS

Building stairways, during the construction process, can be very hazardous. Lack of elevator availability or limited access to the elevator may lead to heavy foot traffic on stairways. If special attention is not given to safety considerations on stairways, accidents during usage are likely to occur. Here are a few general safety suggestions relevant to stairways during the building construction process:

1. All railings should be in place before the stairway is opened for use. Landings with open sides need standard guardrails for proper fall protection. The stairs need handrails for workers to hold when ascending or descending.
2. There should be adequate lighting in the stairway. Adequate lighting can be a problem since permanent lighting is usually installed after the stairway construction is completed. OSHA construction standards require 5 foot-candles of light in stairways. The amount of light can be measured with a standard light meter. If the lighting is inadequate, a temporary light bulb string could be installed in the stairway. Each bulb should be equipped with a protective cover and the string should be inspected daily for burned out or broken bulbs.
3. Keep the stairway clean to reduce the likelihood of slips, trips, or falls. Do not store any tools or construction materials on the stairway. Do not throw trash down on the stairway. Clean up any liquid spills or rain water immediately.
4. As much as possible, try to avoid using the stairway as a means of access for transporting materials between floors. Carrying small materials and tools is fine as long as the materials do not block your vision. Trying to go up or down a stairway while carrying large items is physically demanding and increases your

potential for a strain or sprain injury as well as a fall. Asking a co-worker to help you carry the load may reduce your exposure to a strain, but it may increase the exposure for both of you to be involved in a slip or fall accident. The best alternative is to use the building elevator or crane service.

Do not overlook the potential hazards associated with stairway usage. Stairway safety should be part of your safety program on building construction sites.

GENERAL SAFETY – CARELESSNESS

Have you ever done anything stupid, something that you know puts you at increased risk of injury? When you realize how stupid you were, whether you got hurt or not, do you ask yourself, "Why did I ever do that?" For your own future preservation, this should be a very important question for you to answer yourself. Consider the fact that approximately 20% of injuries are due to unsafe conditions and 80% are caused by unsafe acts. If you realize that most unsafe conditions are brought about by human failure, then virtually all accidents are brought about by unsafe acts. Why did you do something in an unsafe manner? To answer this question, you will need to put personal defenses aside and know that blame may lie within yourself. Also realize that there may be more than one reason for your actions and others may be involved.

If you knew the proper, safe way to do the job, then you cannot claim ignorance. What is left, whether you like it or not, is carelessness. So what can cause you to temporarily disregard your own safety?

External Pressure -- "Let's get this job done!" Usually this pressure comes from your direct supervisor. Disregarding safe practices is not going to save enough time to make a significant difference. However, any accident or injury is guaranteed to have an effect. As a matter of fact, when the pressure is applied, it is worthwhile to pay more attention to safety because we know, from experience, such situations frequently lead to more accidents.

Bad Habits -- You fail to follow the established procedure and you don't get hurt (or you were not caught) this time. Psychologically, this is a

reward and so you do it again and again and again. But it is also Russian roulette. How many times can you pull the trigger before a round is in the chamber? You know, sooner or later, something is going to happen. There is only one way to stop it - stop pulling the trigger. Do yourself a favor and follow the established procedures.

Internal Pressure -- There is just so much to do and not enough time!" Are you self-motivated and self-directed? Most employers love this type of individual, but your single-minded determination to get the job done may cause you to lose sight of the dangers around you. Think of it this way, you will not finish the job if you get hurt. You may finish the job if you don't get hurt. Therefore, first, prevent injury. Second, work to complete the job. Make sense?

Attitude -- "This safety stuff doesn't apply to me!" So what makes you so special? A study of mine accidents involving foremen showed that the foremen were injured when they personally failed to apply the safety standards they were to enforce. Did the fact that they were foremen protect them from injury? No. Humans are humans. There is nothing in your status that will protect you from injury except following the safe procedure.

Remember, safety is no more than doing the job the right way, every day

SOCAT continues it's very successful relationship with Mid-Century Insurance Company-a part of Farmers Insurance Group



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