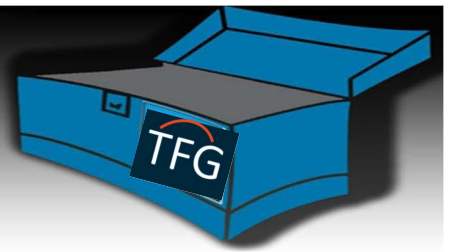


Safety Toolbox



Stairs Safety

Stairways are a common walking surface in most workplaces. Falls from stairs may lead to serious injuries. Because employees use stairways often, maybe even daily, it doesn't seem like a risky venture to "take the stairs" when it is just a normal part of the workday. The safer we feel doing an activity, the more we ignore the risks. The majority of stairway workplace incidents occur when someone is not paying attention, when they are rushing, or when they are not watching their footing.

Some injuries that can be caused by stairs include:

- Cuts, scrapes, and bruises
- Sprained tendons, ligaments, and muscles
- Fractured bones, usually hands, wrists, arms, and hips
- Whiplash, neck, and back injuries
- Head injuries, concussions, and other traumatic brain injuries
- Soft tissue injuries

According to OSHA standard 1910.28(b)(11)(i), stairs must have handrails and stairway landings that are 4 feet or more above a lower level must be protected by a guardrail or rail system.

It is important to follow these basic safety tips when using stairs:

- Always use the handrail when going up or down the stairs. The handrail can help you keep your balance or prevent you from falling if you slip or trip. Do not use the handrail to slide down or swing around the stairs.
- Keep at least one free hand to use the handrail. If you must carry something, make sure it's not too heavy, bulky, or awkward that it blocks your vision or affects your balance. Use a backpack or dolly to transport your items if possible. Never use both hands to carry something while going up or down the stairs. If you need assistance, ask a coworker or manager/supervisor for help.
- Pay attention to the stairs and to your surroundings. Do not use your phone, headphones, or other devices that can distract you or impair your hearing or vision. Do not rush or run to take the stairs, even if you are in a hurry. Take one step at a time and watch your footing. Avoid skipping the steps or jumping over them.
- Keep the stairs and landings clean and clear. Do not leave any trash, debris, spills, or slippery substances on the stairs, such as loose or broken steps, handrails, or railings, to your supervisor/manager.
- Do not use stairs that are damaged, wet, or icy until they are fixed or cleaned.
- Make sure that all stairways have sufficient lighting. Poor lighting can lead to low visibility and make it harder to see where the next step is. Report any lighting issues to your supervisor/manager.
- Wear appropriate footwear for the job. Choose shoes that are comfortable, fit well, and have good traction. Avoid wearing shoes that are too loose, tight, or have heels, laces, or straps that can get caught on the stairs. Keep your shoelaces tied and tucked in.

It seems like a simple task to walk up or down the stairs, and most people are often trying to do something else at the same time. Always avoid distractions while walking down the stairs. Remember, stair injuries can be serious, and life-threatening in some cases. Unlike some exposures, stair hazards or slippery walkways can appear overnight. Take action to remedy the problem when you see it.