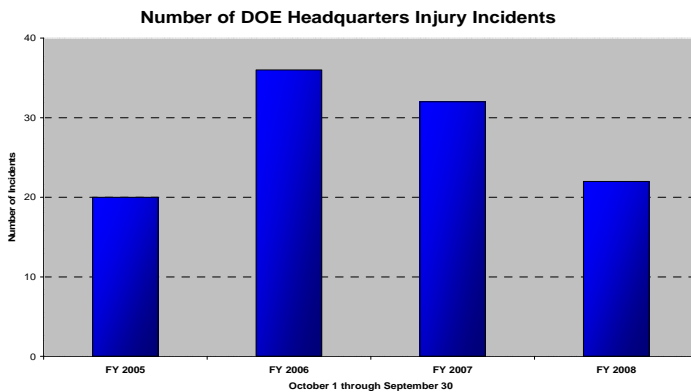


HSS Safety Share

HQ Office Injuries

So far this year, DOE HQ personnel have suffered 21 recordable injuries.¹ Four of these involved the security guard force, but one of these was an office injury. It turns out that offices can be hazardous places to work. This is shown in national statistics and our experience here at HQ bears that out. Just walking caused most of the injuries.



Sometimes the corridors are slippery and at least two injuries this year were attributed to slippery floor surfaces, with one injury causing several lost work days.

Maintenance has an important preventive role here, but each of us also needs to be alert to the possibility of wet floors or hallway debris and either clean up the problem or call maintenance.

Exercise care around elevator doors. As you wait for an elevator, be mindful that it may contain someone who may be in a rush to get off. One employee was injured while exiting an elevator when a person pushing a

loaded cart tried to enter the elevator before the other person had exited. As with the Metro, step back and be sure that personnel have exited before you enter.

With swinging doors, be aware that there may be someone on the other side, so open it slowly. If you are standing near a swinging door, step away in case someone may be approaching from the other side, about to push the door against you.

With stairs and steps, use the handrails and watch the steps. One ankle injury could have been a much worse injury, but the person prevented an actual fall by using the hand rail. Keeping one hand on the railing at all times allows you to tighten your grasp instantaneously if you start to lose your footing.

Two injuries occurred while moving boxes. Both were lower back injuries. We have moving people and hand carts precisely for this reason. Ask for assistance and don't move anything that is too heavy for you.

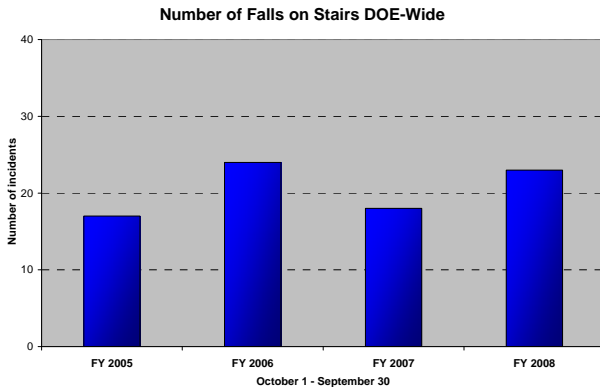
Lastly, please be aware of repetitive tasks such as computer use or shredding or cutting paper. We have lots of ergonomic aids and expertise here. Don't keep working if a repetitive task causes pain or discomfort; rather, report your discomfort and request an ergonomic evaluation.

All of the office injuries that occurred this year were preventable, but it takes awareness on the parts of each of us and on the parts of our managers to recognize and correct potential hazards. We have improved slightly over the same period last year, but we owe it to ourselves to further improve our office safety so that no one gets hurt.

¹ From CAIRS reports (1/1/2008-10/9/2008), filtered to select DOE HQ =21 cases. For 1/1/2007-10/9/2007 DOE HQ=27. OWCP data were not examined for this Safety Share.

Stairs

Walking up or down stairs is an everyday activity to which we normally pay minimal attention, and most of the time, we arrive safely. Yet, in the past three years, nearly 60 DOE personnel have fallen down, or up, stairs or steps and required medical treatment as a result.² Forty of these injuries



entailed restricted or lost time. The most serious cases had multiple fractures of the ankles, leg, knee and/or wrists or sprains or strains to the shoulder. In some cases, a clearly defective condition was found, but in the majority of HSS FEOSH cases, the stairs or steps were in good shape and were dry. In many cases, the injured person was talking with others or was carrying something. Distracted behavior? Yes, probably. Two actions can help each of us prevent injury on stairs: awareness of surroundings and use of handrails, when provided. Also, think about your footwear and avoid shoes that could be dangerous on steps. At work, report areas of poor lighting or inadequate maintenance and at home, inspect your stairs and steps for adequate lighting and condition. Next time you start up or down the

Actions to Prevent Injury on Stairs

- Awareness of surroundings
- Use of handrails
- Avoid shoes that could be dangerous on stairs
- Report areas of poor lighting or inadequate maintenance

steps, resolve to do it safely; use the handrails and pay attention. Practice to make these recommendations automatic whenever you step up or down. It only takes a moment of inattention to cause serious and painful injury. Make stair safety a habit.

UL Listing

As we move toward the darker days of winter, many of us bring out lights and purchase electrical appliances, such as lamps, space heaters, toasters and slow cookers. One assurance of safety is the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) mark on the appliance. UL tests and evaluates samples of a product submitted by manufacturers for certification. If UL decides the product fulfills all applicable requirements it authorizes the manufacturer to apply a certification mark to that product, or to issue a certificate or notification that the product is now certified by UL. Check for this mark when examining an electrical appliance for safety in your home or workplace. It doesn't guarantee electrical safety, but its absence should be a warning sign that the item may not be safe. Also look for frayed wiring and for excessive heat when the appliance is turned on. Of course, we know to avoid use of extension cords for longer than a day or two and to avoid overloading any individual circuit. For lighting that is to be installed outdoors, check to be sure it is certified for outdoor use. Consider replacing your strings

of decorative lighting with LED lighting because the bulbs stay cool and are less likely to start a fire, while also saving energy.

² CAIRS reports 59 cases (1/1/2006-10/9/2008), filtered to select Event = 1102, "Fall down stairs or steps".