Your employees don't have to fall from a great height to be seriously injured—or even killed. In an IWIF study of claims costs for the year 2000, falls on the same level, falls from ladders, and falls to a lower level were the three most common (and costly) types of injuries we recorded.

In response to these costly and preventable injuries, we are providing our policyholders with this article on how to prevent falls in the workplace. Please share this information with your supervisors and employees.

Preventing falls from elevated platforms

Elevated platforms include scaffolds, loading docks, roofs, catwalks, and ramps. A fall from any of these can be especially dangerous because gravity can make the fall even harder. Some ways to prevent falls from elevated platforms include the following:

- Wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the job, such as a full-body harness, tool belt, hard hat, and safety glasses.
- Keep the platform clear of tools, equipment, and debris.
- Don't ride a platform that is being moved by someone else.
- Don't jump to the ground, even if you're not up that high.
- Keep all guardrails in place, and NEVER REMOVE GUARDRAILS.

Preventing falls from scaffolds and other work platforms

To prevent falls from scaffolds, provide ladders or stairs to allow workers to get on and off scaffolds and work platforms safely. Also:

- Keep scaffolds and work platforms free of debris.
- Keep tools and materials as neat as possible on scaffolds and platforms. This will help prevent materials from falling and workers from tripping.
- Erect scaffolds on firm and level foundations. Finished floors will normally support the load and provide a stable base.
- Scaffold legs must be placed on firm footing and secured from movement or tipping, especially when they are placed in the dirt, as on a residential jobsite.
- Don't use blocks, bricks, or pieces of lumber to level or stabilize scaffold footings. Only manufactured base plates or “mud sills” made of hardwood or its equivalent should be used.
- The scaffold must be put up and taken down under the supervision of a competent person knowledgeable about safety issues.

Watch your step wherever you are

Believe it or not, many people are injured each day in falls while just walking around! Some examples of hazards that could cause falls include tools or equipment left lying around, spills not cleaned up, electrical cords or air lines strewn across walkways, loose flooring, debris, and many others.

Follow these rules to prevent falls on the same level:

- Walk; don't run.
- Concentrate on where you're going.
- Wear the right shoes.
- Wear shoes that are in good condition.
- Keep shoelaces tied.
- Clear walkways of fall hazards.

For more information on preventing falls in the workplace, consult the following web sites:
www.osha-slc.gov
www.cdc.gov
www.niosh.gov
www.lohp.org