

# Falls From Short Distances

Slips, trips and falls in the workplace can have a devastating impact on employee health, insurance costs, productivity, morale and ultimately your company's bottom line. According to UH claims data, falls from elevations can be especially costly. In fact, since 2007, our average claim cost for this type of injury is more than \$16,000.

One of the most dangerous types of falls from elevation are those from very short distances — less than 4 feet. It's at these distances (off of a small step stool, step ladder, chair, table, etc.) that fall protection is not required by OSHA. However, losing your balance when working from these heights can lead to major head, neck, hip, arm, foot and knee injuries. This is because in most instances, reaction times are not fast enough to protect you from a fall.

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Since the concern for falling is not as great at lower heights, it's common for fewer precautions to be taken, which could help prevent the fall or lessen its impact.

Some keys to avoiding or lessening the impact of these accidents include:

- **Use the right tool for the job.** When working at any height, use a proper ladder. Don't settle for a student's chair or desk, crate, box or stack of pallets.
- **Make sure the ladder is in good repair.** Inspect before use to make sure there is no damage.
- **Assess the work area.** Are you near an entry way? Are you working in a high traffic area? You may need to limit access to where you are working by redirecting traffic, using caution tape, cones or signage to communicate work is being performed in the area
- **Be aware of your surroundings in all directions.** What else is around?
- **Are there hazards below you?** Could something from above cause you to fall? If you fall, is there something you could hit on the way down?
- **If a fall does occur, tuck your chin to your chest.** This can prevent your head from hitting the ground as you fall.

Remember, it's not always the falls from great heights that hurt the most. Sometimes it's the shorter falls that make the biggest impact on employee health, productivity and costs. If you have additional questions or need further assistance, contact your UH Loss Control Representative.

