



FALLS...MANAGING A LEADING CAUSE OF VOLUNTEER INJURIES

Falls are a leading cause of injuries in the workplace, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the claims history of the Volunteers Insurance Service program. Volunteers sometimes trip on uneven surfaces, or trip on objects left in a walkway. They fall on stairs, slip on slick surfaces, fall when working on ladders and stepstools, fall when they make accidental contact with another person or an object, and in many other kinds of accidents. If they are frail, they are more likely to fall than are stronger volunteers, and more likely to be injured seriously.

Sometimes volunteers are injured by falls in remote locations where they are assigned, such as a client's home. If possible, have the volunteer's supervisor scout those locations to identify and remove hazards. If that is not practical for your organization, tell your volunteers you want them to be your "eyes and ears" at the locations where they work, and report any hazards that could cause an injury to them or anyone else.

One resource we make available to VIS members is our collection of "Preventer Papers" – one-page and two-page documents on injury prevention and vehicle safety. Several papers address specific hazards that can cause falls. The Preventer Papers are good for small-group safety training, or simply to give your volunteers individually. Log into your account at www.visvolunteers.com and you will find the Preventer Papers in the "VIS Vault."

Here are some other resources on fall prevention...

National Council on Aging – www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention. A variety of resources are available, including "evidence-based" fall prevention programs operating throughout the U. S.

Centers For Disease Control and Prevention Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths and Injuries (STEADI) program -- <https://www.cdc.gov/steadi/index.html>. The program includes a "toolkit" with prevention tips, questions you can ask volunteers to see who might be at risk for falling, and material that can be useful for volunteers to identify their own risk of falling.

If you start to fall... Experts say you should bend your elbows and knees and try to take the hit on the fleshiest parts of your body, like the side of your thigh, buttocks and shoulder. "Aim for the meat, not bone," said Kevin Inouye, a stuntman and assistant professor of acting, movement and stage combat at the University of Wyoming. "Your instinct will be to reach out with hands or try to catch yourself with your knee or foot, but they are hard and not forgiving when you go down."

2750 Killarney Drive, Suite 202, Woodbridge, VA 22192 p 800.222.8920 f 703.739.0761