Stair Safety

GuideOne's loss experience shows that slips and falls are the number one liability claim from a frequency and severity standpoint. Many of these slips and falls occur on stariways. Numerous factors can contribute to these types of injuries, including inadequate lighting, missing or damaged handrails, poor maintenance/condition, slippery conditions, loose floor coverings, irregular design of stairs and housekeeping. The following guidelines will help reduce your chances of slips and falls from stairs.

Stair treads

- The stairway should be at least 44 inches wide.
- The height of each step (riser) should be between 7 and 7.5 inches, and the width (tread) should be between 9 and 10 inches.
- Nosing on the stairs should not protrude more than 1.5 inches and should be beveled to reduce trip potential.
- If the steps have a smooth surface, install anti-slip material to the tread. This will provide traction.
- If the stairs are carpeted, ensure that the edge is noticeable.



This photo is an example of carpeted steps that have been installed with a rubber nosing. The rubber nosing will protect the carpeting, keeping it from fraying or tearing and help make the stair nose visible.

Stair landings

- The landing of the stairway should be at least as wide as the width of the stairway.
- Stairways and landings should be kept clear of storage or any other materials. Never use a stairway for temporary storage.



This photo is an example of materials being stored on a stair landing. Storing items on stair landings restricts the walkway, increasing the chances of slips and falls to occur.

Lighting

- Lighting should be provided for stairways. Look for shadows that may be created and adjust lighting accordingly.
- If applicable for stairwells, provide a light switch at the top and the bottom of the stairs.
- There should be no missing, loose, broken or improperly installed screws, brackets or other hardware on the crib or mattress support. Discontinue use of the crib if it is not structurally sound.
- Inspect all lighting daily and replace light fixtures or bulbs that do not work.

Handrails

- Any flight of stairs having four or more risers should be equipped with a handrail and include the following:
- Handrails should be accessible within 44 inches of all portions of the stair width.
- Handrails should be between 34 inches and 38 inches high.
- Handrails should have a diameter of 1.25 inches to 1.5 inches, should be positioned at least 1.5 inches from the wall and should extend beyond the stairway so the user can maintain a hold while taking the last step to the floor.
- Handrails should be in good condition without any physical damage and adequately secured in place.



This photo is an example of exterior steps that are in good condition; however, the stairs have more than four risers, so they should be equipped with an appropriate handrail.



This photo is an example of an inadequate handrail in terms of design. The handrail has poor grasp ability, sharp corners and protruding bolts holding the handrail to the support posts.

Routine Inspections and Maintenance

- Routinely check the stairs for damage to the carpeting, tile, etc.; and immediately make any necessary repairs.
- Look for cracks, decay, or uneven points in the concrete in outdoor stairs. Older stairs have more potential to have these types of hazards.

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