



# **8 SAFETY BLIND SPOTS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR WORKPLACE**

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**R**isk and danger can pop up in seemingly safe professional environments. No matter what kind of workplace an organization maintains, leaders must never lose their urgency or focus on keeping up with sensible and proactive safety protocols. Even one accident in the workplace can have painful and long-lasting effects – for both the injured individual and the company itself.

OSHA indicates there are numerous expenses tied to workplace injuries, starting with workers' compensation. U.S. employers pay an estimated \$1 billion in workers' compensation every week. On top of that, every day an employee is out of the office brings extra costs: from the direct expense of paying medical and legal fees, to the indirect cost of training and paying temporary replacement personnel or the lost productivity from working shorthanded.



The circumstances leading to such extended leaves of absence don't have to be dramatic or wildly unexpected. Something as simple as a fall from a chair while changing a light bulb could result in a broken bone, back injury or other serious condition. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 227,760 nonfatal slip, trip and fall accidents in 2017. Workers suffered 148,780 nonfatal back injuries and 311,330 people sprained, tore or strained their muscles.

Simply put, managers and other business leaders should take nothing for granted when ensuring their workplaces are safe for employees. The following are eight areas of focus that may not typically command attention but are worth monitoring in environments of all kinds.



# 1. SAFETY PLANS

**L**eaders shouldn't overlook creating formal safety plans, even if they assume their environments are safe. OSHA explained how even though it does not have a specific regulation regarding the creation of safety and health programs, it regards these overarching plans as an important part of accident prevention and preparedness. Complying with the many individual OSHA rules about illness and injury prevention means preparing for all possible outcomes, as outlined in safety plans.

Leaders must ensure their workplace safety plans reflect the unique threats and features within their environments. By using OSHA's

**COMPLYING WITH THE MANY INDIVIDUAL OSHA RULES ABOUT ILLNESS AND INJURY PREVENTION MEANS PREPARING FOR ALL POSSIBLE OUTCOMES, AS OUTLINED IN SAFETY PLANS.**

self-inspection checklists or online tools, leaders can look for some of the more common causes of worker injuries. Those hazards may be surprising for leaders, who should be proactive about updating policies and standards to account for new risks they discover. Any money or time spent on such a plan can be offset by the savings of preventing even a single major injury.

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## RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *Back to Work, Back to Safety: Reestablishing Safety Habits After Time Away*



## 2. SLIP AND FALL HAZARDS

**S**afe surfaces with good traction are a potentially overlooked element of office design and maintenance, but they are essential for preventing workplace injuries. The 2017 total of 227,600 nonfatal slip, trip and fall accidents is a clear indication there is a need for safer walking spaces in workplaces. Perhaps even more tellingly, the BLS reported that 849 workers died in falling accidents in 2016, the most recent year for which fatality data is available.

**THE 2017 TOTAL OF 227,600 NONFATAL SLIP, TRIP AND FALL ACCIDENTS IS A CLEAR INDICATION THERE IS A NEED FOR SAFER WALKING SPACES IN WORKPLACES.**



The latest OSHA Walking-Working Surfaces regulations compel employers to provide clean, dry and unobstructed spaces for their employees to walk and work on. Floors must be free of sharp objects, loose boards and corrosion, and they can't become wet or slippery due to the weather. When water is a risk, drainage is required. Furthermore, floors must be able to hold up under the weight they're expected to carry.

### RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *Slip and Fall: Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls*

### 3. FIRE SAFETY

**F**ires can happen to any type of building, anywhere. Employers should be prepared for this likelihood by equipping their buildings with countermeasures such as alarms and sprinklers. One of the most important fire safety considerations isn't a physical device, but rather an organization's response and evacuation plan. Steps should be clearly laid out, and every employee should know their responsibilities in case of an emergency.

**ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FIRE SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS ISN'T A PHYSICAL DEVICE, BUT RATHER AN ORGANIZATION'S RESPONSE AND EVACUATION PLAN.**



In some workplaces, those plans will include fighting fires with handheld extinguishers. In environments where this is the case, OSHA requires employers to train the relevant personnel in the safe operation of the equipment, and periodically inspect and recharge the extinguishers. All workplaces should have clear exits and pathways out of danger, and workers should never be required to put their personal safety at risk for the sake of the building.



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#### RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *Fire: Fire Extinguisher Training for Employees*



## 4. FIRST AID



**W**orkplaces should have the right supplies on hand to treat minor injuries. OSHA noted this is an especially pressing priority when companies are located in relatively remote areas, away from hospitals, clinics or other medical facilities. In conditions without professional medical care nearby, at least one person on duty at any given time should be ready to perform first aid tasks.

In cases where there are notable hazards, such as bloodborne pathogens, workers need to learn how to guard against these risk factors. Training should focus on preparing employees to administer first aid without putting themselves at risk. It's up to employers to get their teams relevant equipment and the training to use it.

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### RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *First Aid: Step Back for Safety*

## 5. SAFE EXITS

**T**he doorways into and out of a building are easy to overlook as a security issue. However, in any kind of emergency that requires an evacuation, blocked, defective or difficult-to-open doors could become a hazard. Exit doors have to be clearly labeled and able to open from the inside while the building is occupied, according to OSHA. There must be exits other than revolving, sliding or overhead doors to ensure a smooth evacuation.

**IN ANY KIND OF EMERGENCY THAT REQUIRES AN EVACUATION, BLOCKED, DEFECTIVE OR DIFFICULT -TO-OPEN DOORS COULD BECOME A HAZARD.**

### RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *Evacuation Procedures*



OSHA's door warnings also extend to the spaces just outside the building. Sometimes, an exit will lead right into a street or alley. In these cases, there should be barriers and caution signs to ensure employees don't immediately put themselves in danger when they leave the building.



## 6. HEIGHTS - LADDERS AND RAILINGS

**W**hen dealing with ladders, the OSHA fall prevention rules are more stringent and specific than in regard to other kinds of office safety tools. For example, ladder rungs have to be between 10 and 14 inches from one another, with exceptions for areas such as elevator shafts and telecommunication towers, and for step stools. Leaders must inspect ladders for safety hazards, and immediately remove risky equipment from service. There are also rules to teach workers – they must have at least one hand on the ladder while climbing, they can't carry loads that could make them fall, and they must face the ladder while ascending or descending.



There are also specific rules and regulations around guardrails. Top rails should be between 39 and 45 inches from the walking surface, and openings should not exceed 19 inches wide. Rails must also be able to resist 200 pounds to the top rail and 150 pounds elsewhere - without fail. Guardrails are the most basic way to prevent falls to lower levels, which claimed 697 worker lives in 2016, according to the BLS.

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### RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *Ladder Safety Refresher for Employees*

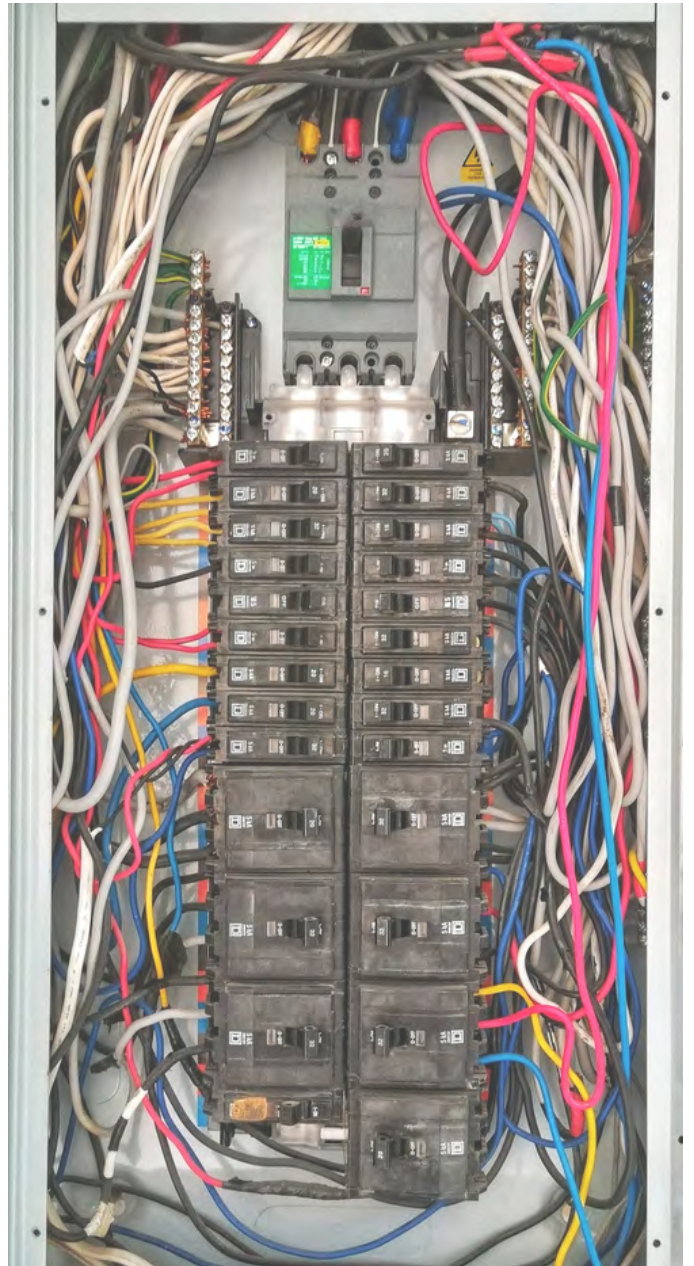


## 7. ELECTRICAL AND MACHINE GUARDING

**E**lectricity-conducting elements must be kept secure and well maintained, as well as heavy powered machinery that could cause harm to employees. When dealing with electrical tools and power sources, workers should make sure all equipment is grounded. Working on electrical equipment requires employees to shut off the power, and employees should be trained to spot possible faults and prohibited equipment, such as multiple-outlet adapters.

**WHEN DEALING WITH ELECTRICAL TOOLS AND POWER SOURCES, WORKERS SHOULD MAKE SURE ALL EQUIPMENT IS GROUNDED.**

When dealing with heavy machinery, workers have to employ safe and compliant lockout and tagout procedures. Each machine must be capable of being locked down during service to ensure it doesn't activate unexpectedly and cause danger to employees.

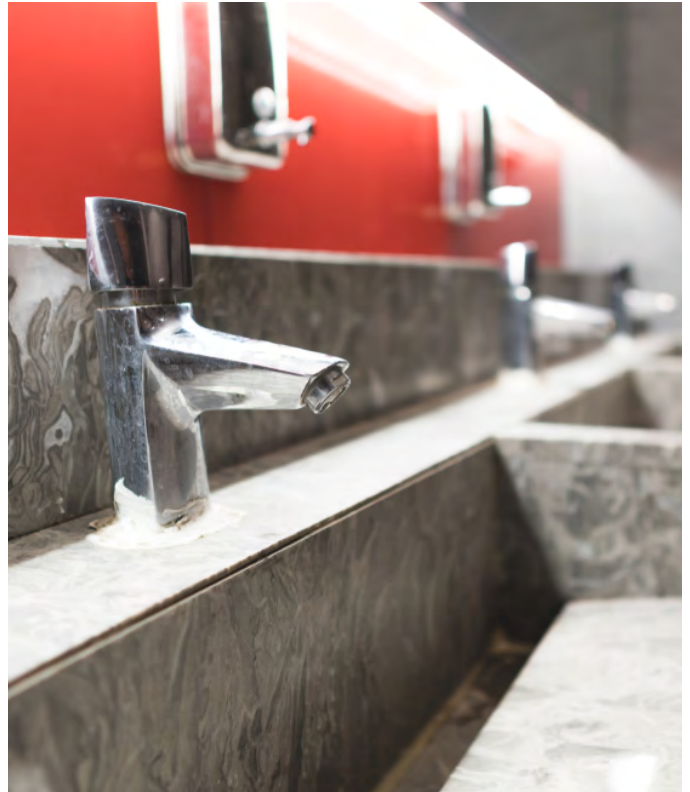


### RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *Electrical Safety: What Everyone Should Know*

## 8. SANITATION

**P**reventing harm in the workplace doesn't just mean putting up railings and keeping floors dry. Everyday sanitation can be an effective safeguard against illness. Eating areas, restrooms and other specialized areas within offices must be kept to high standards of health and safety. Workplaces should provide an acceptable number of toilets and sinks, and keep these clean to prevent health issues from occurring.



In addition to clean spaces, employees should have access to sanitary personal protective equipment. When companies issue gear to their team members, they have a responsibility to make sure the assets aren't making their workers more susceptible to illness. Furthermore, poorly cleaned or maintained PPE could operate less effectively in emergencies, making it an unacceptable risk.

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### RELEVANT TRAINING COURSE

- *Good Housekeeping: To The Point*





## TRAINING FOR SAFETY BLIND SPOTS

**W**hile many of the procedures needed to make an office safer involve making physical changes – purchasing equipment, setting up safety systems and related activities – leaders shouldn't overlook the human element. Workers who are familiar with the risks in their environments, as well as their own duties and best practices, will be safer and better protected from accidents.

There are easily accessible, **video-based training** courses on every element of workplace safety: from everyday trip-and-fall

risks to the proper operation of specialized PPE. Leaders who neglect to train their employees may end up with some of their most important vulnerabilities unaddressed.

From proper first aid procedures to escape routes from the building and the correct way to inspect potential electrical hazards, companies can focus on numerous safety topics in their training. Better prepared workforces can mitigate the common and costly accidents affecting workplaces of all kinds.

