

DOAS Loss Control Bulletin

July 2010

Topic of the Month... Falling

Falls, slips and trips (FST) are one of the top 3 causes of work-related accidents in the State of Georgia agencies. This is also true of most companies as well as residences in the United States. One of our goals this fiscal year is to eliminate as many of these as possible. Here are some quick facts about falls, especially as they relate to the elderly (The average age of state workers increases by 1 each year).

- The risk of falling increases with age and is greater for women than for men.
- Two-thirds of those who experience a fall will fall again within six months.
- A decrease in bone density contributes to falls and resultant injuries.
- Failure to exercise regularly results in poor muscle tone, decreased strength, and loss of bone mass and flexibility.
- At least one-third of all falls in the elderly involve environmental hazards in the home.

Preventing a fall in the first place is crucial. Stay S.H.A.R.P.

- S – Sweep your eyes across the area in front of you
- H – Hazards present?
- A – Analyze potential hazards.
- R – React to any hazards that might affect you.
- P – Proceed cautiously



If You Fall, Do It Safely

1. **Keep your head up.** This is the primary body part you do not want to damage.
 - Put one hand on the back of your head when you're falling backwards so your head does not slam into the ground.
 - Tuck your chin to your chest or focus on looking at your belt so the head doesn't contact the ground when you fall backwards.
 - Falling forward, look a little to the left or right. Only turn your head slightly so you don't seriously injure your neck.
2. **Slap your palms on the ground if falling forward.** Make sure your whole palm slaps the ground. ***This is done only for a second to slow your fall slightly***, and to prevent breaking your wrists. It is not meant to absorb all your weight like a spring or "catch" you.
 - Do this also if falling sideways (use left palm if falling left, right if falling right).

****Note:** Never try to slap the back of your hand against the ground. Always use the palm or edge of your hand. It is easy to break your wrist if you use the back of your hand.

 - Don't lock your elbows.
3. **Tuck your arms in close to your body**, and try to land on a shoulder with a rolling motion.
4. **Breathe Out Normally.** Breathe out normally to keep your body flexible and relaxed, and greatly reduce the risk of injury.
5. **Fold your body like an accordion.** Bend your ankles, then your knees, then your hips. Fold your body into itself. This decreases the height of your fall. If falling backwards, try to bend at the knees and squat before the fall. Curl your back and roll on it.

Thanks for your time. Let's work together to make Georgia a safer place to work.