STAIRWAY SAFETY

Risk Management and Safety
Camp Auburn Safety Annex
971 Camp Auburn Road
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Objectives

- This presentation will discuss stairway safety and the dangers associated with using stairs.
- How stairways contribute to slips, trips, and falls.
- How we place ourselves at risk doing the most common of things such as going up and down stairs.
The National Safety Council and the US Government Bureau of Labor Statistics track accident and injury statistics. The two organizations are the primary resources for attaining such information.
What the Data Tells Us

- According to both the National Safety Council and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, falls are the number two cause of fatalities in the workplace, second only to motor vehicle and transportation accidents.

- Falls have consistently been either the number one or number two cause of fatalities for the last 40 years.
How Accidents and Injuries Occur

- There are two categories of accidents:
  - Unsafe Acts.
  - Unsafe Conditions.

- Over 80% of accidents occur as a result of Unsafe Acts.

- This means Unsafe Conditions are not the leading cause of occurrences.
Anatomy of an Accident

- Do people deliberately hurt themselves?

- Is their first thought in the morning, “This would be a great day to get hurt” or “I think I will have an accident today”?

  Perhaps, but...
Anatomy of an Accident

- It more likely they are distracted.
- They are rushing or are in a hurry.
- They are not watching their footing.
- Or it may be all the above.
Stairways...are they Harmless?

- As harmless as they may seem, stairways present many opportunities for people to injure themselves.

- It is because we do not “perceive” going up or down a stairway to be a risky venture.

- We view the use of stairways as simply apart of our daily routine.
Perception of Risk

- "Perception of Risk" can lead to poor decision making which can result in accidents or injury.

- When we engage in "at risk" behavior and suffer no consequences, it reinforces more risky behavior.

- The safer we feel doing it, the more we ignore the risks associated with the activity.
The Crap Shoot

- Being in the “at risk” pool is just like shooting dice in Las Vegas, it is simply a matter of time before you win the crapshoot.

- In this case, your payoff is an accident or injury.
The Lack of Perception of Risk

- Most people do not approach a stairway and think, “There is potential risk here for me if I am not careful.”

- You don’t have to think about using stairs and most people don’t.

- The “every day” aspect of the activity leads to our unsafe behavior.
The Law of Gravity

- The rules applied to the Law of Gravity tells us that it is more hazardous to descend a stairway than to ascend it.

- Though accidents may occur ascending the stairs, there is a greater chance of falling down stairs.

- The forces of gravity may force you down multiple steps causing serious injury.
Distractions

- Being distracted is a common unsafe behavior that can lead to an accident.

- Some common distractions include:
  - talking on a phone.
  - checking the time.
  - reading.
  - talking with a colleague.
Distractions

- The use of cell phones or radios while on the stairway can prove to be a distraction whether you are talking or texting.

- Checking your wristwatch or even your phone for time takes your eyes away from your footing.
Distractions

- Reading as you descend stairs not only takes your attention away from your footing but also blocks your vision.

- Talking with a colleague is a distraction and now there are two people engaging in “at risk” behavior.
Distractions

- Perhaps the most “at risk” behavior is that of carrying a load while using stairs.

- Carrying a load is most distracting because your attention is focused on balancing the load, your vision is blocked, your eyes are away from your footing, and your hands are too full to grip a handrail.
The concept of the handrail is basic, if you slip, trip or begin to fall while descending a staircase, grabbing the handrail can break your fall and save you from serious injury.

Yet, most people ignore the use of it.

Why?
Handrails

- If we descend stairways 1000 times and we do not fall, we are apt to thinking a fall is not possible, yet we have placed ourselves in the crapshoot.

- It’s the 1001st descent when we can “win” or in our case, become injured.
Unsafe conditions also contribute to accidents, so it is important to be able to recognize them.

Take extra precaution when using wet stairs caused by rain or spills.

When we are alert we are more likely to observe unsafe conditions.
Unsafe Conditions

- If you observe unsafe conditions on stairways, do not assume that someone else will report it.

- Inform your supervisor or maintenance personnel immediately so that a repair or clean up can be carried out as quickly as possible.
Unsafe Practices

- Many slips and falls on stairways are caused by the way we approach going up and down a stairway.

- For example, always make use of the full width of the stair tread.

- Walking on the very end of the tread invites a slip and fall.
Unsafe Practices

- Be sure to make use of the full tread when walking stairs.
- Avoid stepping to the very end of the tread as it interrupts balance.
Lifting Clear of the Tread

- Make certain when you are descending a stairway that you lift your foot clear of the upward tread so that you do not catch your heel on the tread as you descend.

- This is especially the case with exterior treads with slip resistant surfaces.

- Some exterior slip resistant treads can actually become a hazard if you do not lift your heel to clear the tread properly.
Ascending and Descending Hazards

- A common cause of falls while ascending or descending stairs is “stair hopping.”

- Stairs should be ascended or descended one tread at a time and only while using the handrail.
Clothing Hazards

- Your clothing can also present a hazard when using stairs.

- Loose clothing can cause a tripping hazard especially when going down stairs.

- Untied shoe laces or pants that are too long can create tripping hazards that can be especially dangerous.
Change Your Perception

- Stairways are all around us and we use them daily.
- Just a small change in our perception of the risks can save you from being another accident statistic.
- Using stairway safety takes only a slight shift in our behavior.

THINK BEFORE YOU STEP!
Questions?

If you have questions please call:
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