

Avoiding Falls and Slips from Equipment, Trucks and Trailers

Key Points

- While they might sound like minor incidents, falls and slips from equipment, trucks and trailers can cause severe knee, ankle, back, head and leg injuries and occasionally even fatalities.
- Slips, trips and falls are the third leading cause of injuries in the landscape, lawn care and plant nursery industry, according to data from insurance company CNA, and rank third in workers' compensation costs as well.
- The main causes of falls from equipment, trucks and trailers are: exiting the cab while facing forward; not using hand holds; jumping off equipment; and feet slipping off steps.
- Almost all of these incidents can be avoided when employers and employees take steps to prevent mounting/dismounting injuries.

Employers' and Supervisors' Checklist

- ✓ Understand that failing to take precautions to protect employees from slips and falls from equipment, trucks and trailers could mean violating federal OSHA's general-duty clause, which requires employers to provide workplaces free of known safety hazards.
- ✓ Know that most injuries resulting from slips and falls from equipment, trucks and trailers occur when workers fail to maintain three points of contact – and this usually happens when they are in a hurry.
- ✓ Evaluate every truck, trailer and machine and install additional non-slip surfaces, hand holds, steps and ladders where needed.
- ✓ Inspect steps, hand holds and contact surfaces regularly for damage and wear (perform maintenance as needed) and train employees to keep steps, hand holds, pedals and cab floors clear of mud, grease, snow and debris.
- ✓ Install decals reminding workers of injury risks and the need to use three-point contact.
- ✓ Ensure employees wear sturdy work boots with open, slip-resistant tread, along with all other PPE necessary for the work they are performing. Work shoes should meet [ASTM F2412-11](#) and [ASTM F 2413-11](#).
- ✓ Cover entering and exiting the cab/operator's station when training workers to operate various pieces of equipment. Remember employees must receive training specific to each particular model they use.
- ✓ Also cover properly entering/exiting truck cabs and accessing trailers. Ensure workers know the procedures for every type of truck and trailer they might be asked to use.
- ✓ Prohibit jumping on or off equipment, vehicles or trailers.
- ✓ Closely supervise new employees to verify they follow instructions given during training.

- ✓ Remind crew leaders to monitor ways all crew members enter/exit vehicle and equipment cabs/operating stations and access trailers. When crew members observe mistakes, they should conduct refresher training and/or take disciplinary measures (for repeated offenses).
- ✓ If possible, provide equipment that will allow workers to load/unload materials without climbing onto trailers or into truck beds. Equipment that has the ability to reach to the middle of the truck bed or trailer is best.

Crew members' dos and don'ts

Do:

- Wear sturdy work boots with slip-resistant, open-tread soles.
- Clean your shoes if you step in grease, oil or mud.
- Enter and exit facing the vehicle, equipment or trailer. This gives you better foot control (contact with the toe portion of foot rather than heel) and a larger portion of your foot will be in contact with surface areas, reducing the chances you'll slip.
- Always maintain three points of contact when entering/exiting vehicle and equipment cabs and operating stations. This means maintaining contact with the ground, a hand hold or step with two hands and one foot or both feet and one hand. Before lifting one leg to climb up, you must have both hands firmly grasping the equipment or vehicle. Before letting go of one of the hand holds when exiting/dismounting, make sure both feet are steady on the ground. Following the three-point rule greatly reduces your chances of slipping and falling.
- Grip hand holds firmly.
- Use ladders or steps for accessing truck beds and trailers equipped with them.
- Climb and descend slowly to avoid straining muscles.
- Evaluate the ground for uneven/unstable terrain and obstacles before stepping down.
- Use the slip-resistant step when entering/exiting a skid-steer loader cab.
- When entering a min-excavator, use three-point contact, then spin into the cab while maintaining one hand-hold.
- Keep steps, hand holds, pedals and cab floors free of mud, grease, oil, snow, ice and debris.
- Work together when loading or unloading trucks and trailers manually. One person should hand down items to another standing on the ground. This reduces the number of times someone will climb on/off the truck bed or trailer.

Don't

- Jump on or off equipment, vehicles or trailers. Use steps and handholds where they are available. Where they aren't, sit on the lowest edge, then lower yourself carefully to the ground.
- Use tires, wheel hubs or truck ball hitches as step surfaces. Only use contact points intended for climbing or dismounting.
- Use doorframes or door edges as hand holds.
- Climb up or down with something in your hand.
- Rush to leave a cab or dismount after your shift.
- Enter/exit a skid-steer loader unless the bucket is flat on the ground. Never use foot or hand

controls for steps or hand holds, and don't step on the slick edge of an attachment when entering or exiting the cab.

- Step on the foot controls of compact excavators when entering or leaving the machine or use control levers as handholds.
- Be in a hurry. Your employer would rather you work safely and slowly than too quickly and risk injury.

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