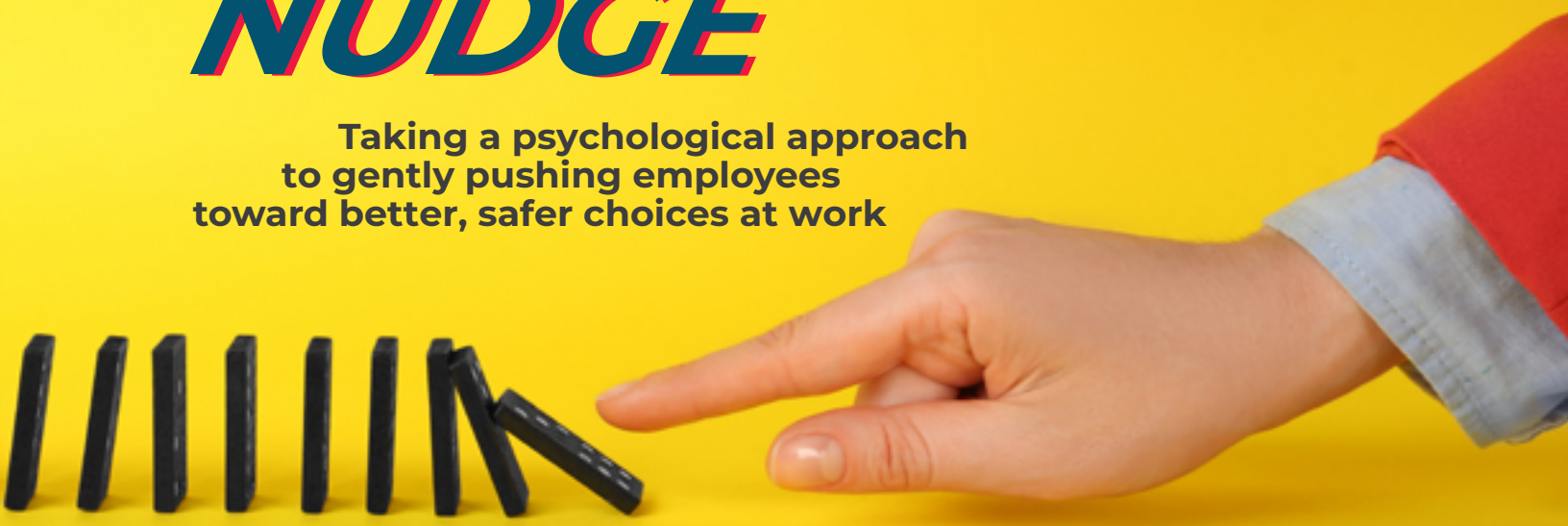
VOLUME 16 | ISSUE 2
APRIL - JUNE 2025

SAFETY & LOSS PREVENTION OUTLOOK

GIVE THEM A NUDGE

Taking a psychological approach to gently pushing employees toward better, safer choices at work



ALSO INSIDE:

OUTLOOK

Issue 2, Volume 10 | April - June

A Message from the Editor

"Every safety regulation is written in blood."

My work in risk management over the past eight years has given me a unique glimpse into our workplaces -- each month, hundreds of accounts of unsafe behaviors and dangerous situations, spreadsheets full of real people whose lives have been impacted by injuries at work, stories and statistics I've gathered as sources for this publication that have made a huge impact on me.

I now see hazards I would have missed in the past, wipe up spills and move objects that I would have once walked around (450,000 workplace slip, trip, & fall injuries per year), hold onto handrails on the stairs (12,000 deaths from falls on stairs each year), and annoy others with my insistence that they do things the safe way too (sorry kids, get off that chair and go get the step stool).

Recently I overheard the manager of a local business complain that regulators, inspectors, and safety coordinators seem to be "on a mission to write you up for every little thing."

It probably seemed like a little thing for a manufacturing facility to install machines without the required guards and locking devices -- until an employee lost part of his arm.

It probably seemed like a little thing for a contractor to allow their roofers to work without proper fall protection -- until one of them fell to his death.

I'm sure my uncle Rick thought it was no big deal to take another electrician's word instead of doing a proper lockout/tagout -- until he stuck his ungloved hand into a live power box -- just a "little thing" that changed my family forever.

In the business of risk management, *there are no little things.*

This is why it's so important for every employee, from entry level to management, to understand not only what the rules are, but *why* they exist. Machine guards protect people from losing limbs. Fall protection equipment prevents people from falling to their death. Lockout/tagout procedures are regulated to require people to take the time to do the safe thing, because when they weren't followed, my uncle Rick, along with so many others, lost their lives.

"Every safety regulation is written in blood." We owe it to our coworkers, our families, and ourselves to heed the lessons of those who coined that phrase. Here at DRM, we are proud to see so many safety professionals across the state of Florida doing just that. It's no small thing.

Lori Taylor

Managing Editor

IN THIS ISSUE

give them a NUDGE toward safety

TAKING A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO INFLUENCING SAFE BEHAVIOR AT WORK

From the time we're born, whether spoken or unspoken, written in manuals or published in law books, rules provide the framework of safety, stability, efficiency, fairness, and accountability, in every aspect of our lives. Even so, most humans generally prefer being able to make our own choices, or at least to feel like we're making the choices ourselves.

Parents and preschool teachers know that children are more likely to comply with a rule or request when given a choice rather than an order ("Would you like to wipe down the tables or put away the toys?"), and even more likely if the task feels like a game ("How many toys can you put away in five minutes?"), possibly even with a reward at the end.

Adults work the same way -- so bombarding employees with posters and binders full of rules they have to follow is unlikely to succeed. Rules that seem superfluous, arbitrary, too complicated, too strict, or just too many in number can make workers feel overwhelmed, overburdened, and even insulted.

They may "tune out" or ignore rules they think don't apply to them or seem unnecessary because it's "just common sense." Safety rules that impede workflow can make it seem tempting to skirt them.

But when employees are "nudged" into choosing to follow workplace rules, they are more likely to comply.

The best part? It works [even if people know that they are being nudged](#).

FOLLOW THE RULES ... WHAT ARE THEY AGAIN?

Rapid advances in technology mean frequent changes in equipment and workplace procedures, and safety professionals have the challenging task of keeping up. Successful organizations know the importance of establishing rules that work for everyone and having the flexibility to reevaluate or restructure them as needed.

But the real challenge for safety professionals isn't making the rules, it's getting employees to understand and actually follow them, especially when changes are made. And since not every hazard can be addressed by a rule, it's important for employees to have the ability to make split-second decisions to keep everyone safe.

WHAT IS A NUDGE?

Nudge theory is the belief that placing small, subtle cues (or "nudges") in a person's environment can affect their decisions and influence their behavior by tapping into their unconscious mind without inhibiting their autonomy. A nudge works differently from a command in that it still offers people a choice but subtly encourages them to choose a certain way. In their Nobel Prize-winning book on the topic, Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein define a nudge as something "that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives." They differ from marketing techniques in that they focus on enhancing the wellbeing of the individual (pro-self) and/or society (pro-social) as opposed to boosting the nudger's profit.

NUDGE THEORY AT WORK

We are influenced by nudges all the time, whether we notice them or not -- from the basket of free fruit at the grocery store (which encourages healthy snacking while discouraging shoppers from stealing the produce) to handwashing signs in restaurant bathrooms (which tell employees that handwashing is mandatory for them but actually encourage the behavior from everyone). We even nudge ourselves -- we set alarms on our phones to remind us to stretch, stash healthy snacks in our desks to discourage trips to the vending machine, and keep water bottles in our line of sight to encourage us to drink more. The right cues in the right place at the right time can subconsciously guide our thinking and, in the workplace, encourage employees to make better choices.

RULE + NUDGE = SUCCESS

Traditional safety methods, such as rules, mandatory procedures, and signs often focus on prohibiting certain behaviors ("Danger", "Keep off", "Forbidden", etc.), often with the threat of punishment, which can cause pushback from workers. Nudges work not by making it impossible to do the wrong thing, but by making it easier to do the right thing.

Manuals or safety signage with too much text can be overwhelming, whereas a nudge elicits understanding intuitively and immediately.

Nudges work well in conjunction with traditional safety methods -- the manual or sign spells out the rules, and the nudges remind people to follow them.

NUDGES: *REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES*

USING A VISUAL CUE TO ENCOURAGE ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Each time they log into their computers, employees at the Florida Department of Financial Services are greeted by a splash screen that reads "Don't let anyone phish your inbox," along with tips on how to avoid malware, reminding them to take care when reading their email.

USING FUN TO ENCOURAGE HEALTHIER CHOICES

A Metro station in Sweden wanted to encourage the use of stairs over escalators and elevators, so they turned the stairs into a giant piano -- a fun way to allow people to make music while getting extra steps into their commute.

MAKING THE DESIRED CHOICE THE DEFAULT

In 1979, Spain implemented an organ donor program that presumes consent unless the deceased or their family have opted out. The program does not make organ donation mandatory but instead makes organ donation the default choice. Interestingly, the policy had little effect until 1989, when hospitals were mandated to employ qualified donor coordinators in every facility. This model has allowed Spain to boast the highest number of organ donors in the world. Many other countries such as England, Austria, and France now have similar policies in place.

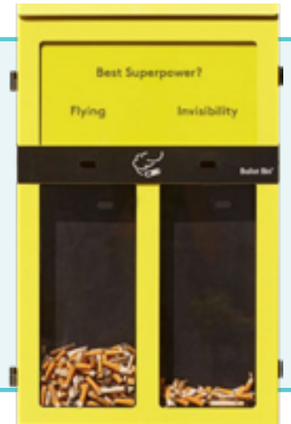
USING SOCIAL NORMS AND COMPETITION TO ENCOURAGE BETTER BEHAVIOR

Utility customers in neighborhoods near San Diego were given information about their energy usage along with their bills, as well as the average energy usage of their neighbors. A portion of households were also given stickers -- a "smiley face" if they used less than the neighborhood average, or a "frowny face" if they used more. Those without stickers adjusted their consumption toward the neighborhood average -- those using more than their neighbors started using less, and those who used less actually started using more. However, those who also received a sticker either maintained or reduced their usage, resulting in overall lower energy consumption for those households.

A BIT OF FRIENDLY COMPETITION TO BRING BETTER BEHAVIOR

In 2015, the first ballot bin was installed in the UK, asking smokers to "vote with their butts" instead of tossing them on the ground -- a wildly successful social experiment that has been shown to cut cigarette litter by more than 70%. Ballot bins can now be found in 43 countries across the world, collecting around 15 million cigarette butts a year. And ballot bins for all types of trash have started popping up.

If your workplace had a ballot bin, what debates would you like to see settled first?



TYPES OF NUDGES

Nudges generally involve managing one of two things -- people's attention (visual cues, strategic placement of better options) or people's incentives (rewarding good behavior).

ATTENTION:

- Visual cues (signs, caution tape, lights, images of workers wearing proper protective equipment, mirrors with positioning guides)
- Auditory cues (loudspeaker announcements or alarms)
- Textural cues (grip tape or floor mats to help workers feel where their hands or feet should be)

INCENTIVES:

- Feedback (praise or reward for preferred behavior, "gamifying" preferred behavior to incentivize participation)
- Social-proofing (peer pressure, workplace culture norms, encouragement from others, leading by example, competition)
- Reducing barriers to preferred behavior (readily available trash bins, intuitive workspaces with safety equipment such as PPE available where it is used, making safety the "default" choice)

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO CHOOSE SAFETY

Nudges work best when they are well-placed and well-timed. Workers are most receptive to safety messages at transition points (start of day, breaks, shift changes, etc.). Embed safety cues into your workspace where and when they will be best received to increase their effectiveness and boost compliance.

People nudged into preferred behaviors are more likely to internalize and sustain those behaviors if they align with their personal values, goals, and interests. Keep this in mind when planning nudges that will work for the individuals in your organization.

Employees know better than anyone what their jobs entail, what equipment they need, and what works or doesn't work. Engage with your staff to better understand their challenges, and take their concerns seriously.

Uncomfortable PPE (like ill-fitting eye protection), broken equipment (like machines with loose or missing guarding), or other inconveniences (like cleaning supplies stored too far away from where messes happen) can discourage employees from making safe choices. Letting them choose their own safety equipment and procedures helps to increase buy-in.

Move away from simply policing bad behavior and work towards understanding why bad behaviors persist. People naturally look for "the path of least resistance"; knowing what motivates employees can help safety professionals lead them to safer behaviors.

INCORPORATING A USEFUL REMINDER FOR EMPLOYEES

In 2017, engineering firm Ramboll installed mirrors at every entrance to the construction site for the new headquarters for Danish beer company Carlsberg, along with signs reading, "Who is responsible for safety today?" Not a single accident was reported onsite during the project.

Mirrors can be a great tool for nudging employees into safer behavior. Stickers placed on mirrors can remind employees to wash their hands or check for correct PPE. New "smart mirror" technology can even show employees how to put on PPE and prevent them from entering certain areas if it isn't being worn properly.

NUDGES:
PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WORKPLACE

NUDGE	EXAMPLES	PRINCIPLES
Have cleaning supplies conveniently located where they are most likely to be needed	▪ Paper towels near sinks & water coolers ▪ Cleaning wipes in the breakroom (especially if there's a microwave) ▪ Readily available trash cans & recycling bins ▪ Hand sanitizer at high-touch areas	removing barriers, well-placed cue, social-proofing
Place visual guides regarding safety at workplace entrances & workspaces where hazards exist	▪ Posters showing workers wearing proper PPE ▪ Checklists of safety equipment ▪ "Wipe your feet" signs ▪ Mirrors/positioning guides at workstations where workers can check for correct fit of PPE (placement of hard hats, harnesses, etc.) ▪ Handwashing signs in restrooms	well-timed visual cue, social-proofing, feedback
Provide PPE that works for all workers (e.g. fit, comfort, style, effectiveness); make PPE available where it is needed	▪ hard hats at entrances of worksites ▪ eye protection at every station where chemicals are used ▪ gloves, masks, etc. where biohazards exist ▪ harnesses where fall protection is needed	removing barriers, well-placed cue, social-proofing
Set up "intuitive workspaces" to encourage / discourage certain behaviors	▪ Move printers away from desks to encourage people to get up and move more & discourage excess printing ▪ Keep healthy snacks in readily-available common areas, less healthy snacks at a greater distance	removing barriers, well-placed cue, social-proofing
Design stairways to increase use & encourage safe behavior	▪ Signs regarding safe behavior (use handrails, do not carry boxes on stairs, etc.) ▪ Arrows or lines creating "lanes" for up or down ▪ Messages painted on steps (calorie-burn counts, artwork, encouraging words, math equations, etc.) ▪ Chalk outline at the bottom of the stairwell (see OUTLOOK Vol. 15 Issue 3 Pg. 3)	incentive (gamifying, feedback), social-proofing, well-placed cue
Give rewards to employees to encourage safe behavior	▪ Punch cards for proper PPE use ▪ "Cleanest workspace" contest ▪ Award employees "caught in the act" of being safe	incentive (gamifying, feedback), social-proofing
Offer challenges/friendly competition to encourage certain behaviors (e.g. safe work practices, drinking more water, recycling, using/returning PPE, etc.)	▪ Have teams compete (e.g., "Safest Section Award") to earn special privileges (extra break time, parking spaces, etc.) ▪ Use the "ballot bin" method -- attach poll questions to a pair of containers (water coolers, recycling bins, PPE return bins, etc.) and let people "vote"	incentive (gamifying, feedback), social-proofing, well-placed cue
Make safety training fun and interesting to make it more memorable	▪ Bring in engaging speakers to share real-life scenarios ▪ Use games to teach employees about safety (see next page)	incentive (gamifying, feedback), social-proofing

make it fun! WORKPLACE SAFETY GAMES

Playing games together helps employees learn workplace safety in fun and memorable ways through active engagement, hands-on experience, reinforcement of concepts, and camaraderie.

GAME	GAMEPLAY
HAZARD HUNT Employees search the workplace for hazards	▪ Create a checklist of possible hazards (slip & trip hazards, striking against/stepping on hazards, unsafe equipment, etc.). ▪ Split employees into teams and have them walk around the workplace looking for potential hazards (spills, cluttered walkways, overloaded outlets, open drawers, sharp objects, boxes stacked too high, etc.). ▪ Points can be awarded based on number and/or severity of hazards -- bonus points awarded for offering solutions.
SAFETY TRIVIA/ JEOPARDY! Employees are quizzed on safety-related topics	▪ Prepare a set of safety-related questions and call them out quiz-style, or create a Jeopardy-style board with categories like "PPE," "Fire Safety," "Hazard Recognition," etc. Teams or individuals earn points for each correct answer. ▪ Sample questions: "What is the proper way to lift a heavy object?" "What does PPE stand for?" "Where is the AED/fire extinguisher/first-aid kit located on this floor?"
SAFETY TRAINING BINGO Employees try to fill their bingo cards with safety lessons	▪ Create bingo cards with different safety topics to be discussed in a training presentation. ▪ Employees listen to the presentation and mark off the various topics on their bingo cards -- first one to fill a row or a card wins. ▪ This game encourages employees to pay attention during training presentations.
SAFETY SCAVENGER HUNT Teams race to be the first to find and complete a list of safety-related challenges	▪ Split employees into teams and have them race to be the first to find safety-related items or complete safety-related tasks throughout the workplace. ▪ Add trivia facts or questions in each location to reinforce safety knowledge. ▪ Sample game: Each team starts with an instruction to go to a certain location ("Find the nearest fire extinguisher."). There players will find their next instruction to go to the next location ("Where is the stepstool stored?" "Count the stairs between landings." etc.). Teams can be staggered or sent to locations in different order if needed to avoid people crowding the same place at once.
SAFETY BOARD GAME Redesign a board game to be relevant to workplace safety	▪ Chutes and Ladders: Players must navigate various hazards as they encounter workplace scenarios, with safe behavior helping them climb ladders and unsafe behavior sending them down chutes. ▪ Monopoly: Transform it into "Safetyopoly" by renaming properties in each category (Safety Equipment, Safety Standards, Training Procedures, Emergency Preparedness, etc.); replace Chance and Community Chest cards with "Hazard" and "Safety Award" cards (ex.: "Slipped on water in the breakroom. Pay $100 for medical expenses." "Collect $150 for reporting a potential hazard."). ▪ Trivial Pursuit: Each color represents a safety-related category (green = PPE, yellow = hazards, etc.); players must answer questions related to each safety topic to collect wedges (same gameplay as the original game).
PPE RELAY RACE Employees race to put on PPE	▪ Set up stations with personal protective equipment (gloves, goggles, ear plugs, etc.). Employees must put each piece on properly before moving to the next station.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK

MAY 4-10, 2025

Hurricane season begins June 1, but tropical cyclone activity can occur before then. The time to prepare for the storm is NOW.

Recent Changes In Forecast/Advisory Alerts

In 2024, the National Hurricane Center extended its tropical weather outlooks from five to seven days to help give people a little more time to plan.

This year, they also extended the "Potential Tropical Cyclone" (PTC) designation from 48 to 72 hours, allowing the National Hurricane Center and other agencies to issue tropical weather alerts sooner.

Expect to see watches and warnings on disturbances that are expected to reach tropical storm strength within 36 hours.

ATLANTIC STORM NAMES

ANDREA	LORENZO
BARRY	MELISSA
CHANTAL	NESTOR
DEXTER	OLGA
ERIN	PABLO
FERNAND	REBEKAH
GABRIELLE	SEBASTIEN
HUMBERTO	TANYA
IMELDA	VAN
JERRY	WENDY
KAREN	

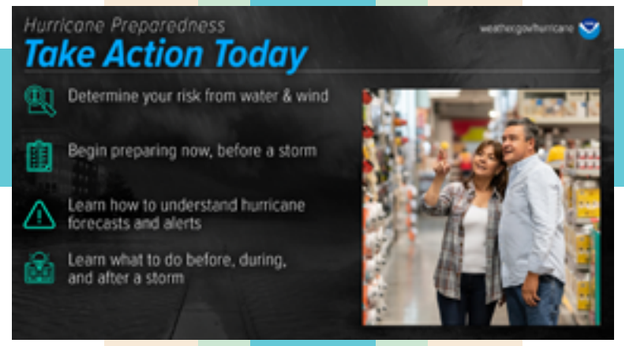
Measuring Forecast Accuracy

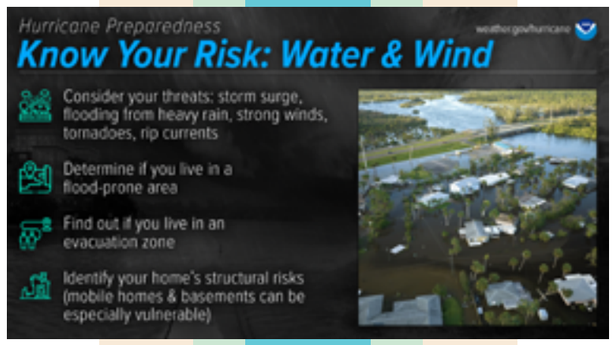
Weather apps are great at predicting exactly when and where it will rain, sometimes down to the the minute and the street. But this can give people a false sense of preparedness when it comes to tropical storms, which spin and wobble as they approach, making precise landfall predictions difficult. Plus, "rapid intensification" of hurricanes is becoming more frequent (34 events in 2024, nearly double the average of the past 10 years), issuing a significant challenge for forecasters.

That being said, forecast accuracy has improved tremendously in recent years (the NHC set an all-time record for forecast accuracy in 2024), thanks to new-and-improved modeling techniques developed after decades of research by the Hurricane Forecast Improvement Project.

2024 data from the National Bureau of Economic Research showed that these advancements led to a 19% reduction in hurricane-related costs, estimated at $2-5 billion per hurricane.

Simply put, better predictions mean better preparedness. But be sure you get the most up-to-date forecasts from reliable sources; social media sites can be filled with erroneous or out-of-date information. Visit the National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center websites for the most accurate, up-to-date forecasts.





STORM WARNING FLAGS

Florida's vast coastline allows its residents many opportunities to spend time on the water. Pay attention to these flags displayed at coastal stations to warn those on the water about hazardous weather conditions.

SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY
(23-38 mph winds)

GALE WARNING
(39-54 mph winds)

STORM WARNING
(55-73 mph winds)

HURRICANE WARNING
(74+ mph winds)

HOW TO READ THE NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER'S FORECAST/ADVISORY

The advisory statements sent out by the National Hurricane Center can seem like a secret code. Here's how to crack it.

The Forecast/Advisory is generally composed of several sections; those included will always occur in the same order, making them easy to identify.

Here is an example Forecast/Advisory from Hurricane Lee, which took place in September 2023.

WHAT IT SAYS

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WTNT23 KNHC 102156
TCMAT3

HURRICANE LEE FORECAST/ADVISORY NUMBER 22
NWS NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER MIAMI FL AL132023
2100 UTC SUN SEP 10 2023

HURRICANE CENTER LOCATED NEAR 22.1N 61.7W AT 10/2100Z
POSITION ACCURATE WITHIN 15 NM

PRESENT MOVEMENT TOWARD THE WEST-NORTHWEST
OR 300 DEGREES AT 7 KT

ESTIMATED MINIMUM CENTRAL PRESSURE 959 MB

EYE DIAMETER 20 NM

MAX SUSTAINED WINDS 105 KT WITH GUSTS TO 120 KT.
64 KT....... 40NE 35SE 30SW 40NW.
50 KT....... 90NE 70SE 50SW 80NW.
34 KT.......150NE 140SE 100SW 140NW.
4 M SEAS....300NE 180SE 240SW 300NW.
WINDS AND SEAS VARY GREATLY IN EACH QUADRANT. RADII
IN NAUTICAL MILES ARE THE LARGEST RADII EXPECTED
ANYWHERE IN THAT QUADRANT.

REPEAT...CENTER LOCATED NEAR 22.1N 61.7W AT 10/2100Z
AT 10/1800Z CENTER WAS LOCATED NEAR 21.9N 61.4W

FORECAST VALID 11/0600Z 22.7N 62.7W
MAX WIND 115 KT...GUSTS 140 KT.
64 KT... 50NE 40SE 35SW 50NW.
50 KT... 90NE 80SE 50SW 80NW.
34 KT...150NE 140SE 100SW 140NW.

EXTENDED OUTLOOK. NOTE...ERRORS FOR TRACK HAVE
AVERAGED NEAR 125 NM ON DAY 4 AND 175 NM ON DAY 5...
AND FOR INTENSITY NEAR 15 KT EACH DAY

OUTLOOK VALID 14/1800Z 28.9N 68.0W
MAX WIND 90 KT...GUSTS 110 KT.
50 KT...110NE 100SE 90SW 100NW.
34 KT...200NE 200SE 160SW 200NW.

REQUEST FOR 3 HOURLY SHIP REPORTS WITHIN 300 MILES
OF 22.1N 61.7W

NEXT ADVISORY AT 11/0300Z
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WHAT IT MEANS

WMO Header Section contains the assigned United Nations World Meteorology Organization document identifier (WTNT23), the NWS identifier (KNHC), the storm type (HURRICANE) and name (LEE), advisory number (22), the issuing center (in this case, the NHC), a tropical cyclone identifier (format is BBNNYYY, BB=Basin [AL=Atlantic, EP=Eastern Pacific], NN=sequence number, YYYY=year), and the time (2100 hours, Coordinated Universal Time) and date (Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023) of the advisory.

Storm Location Section contains the location of the storm center in latitude and longitude with the issuance date/time of the product and an estimate of the accuracy, in nautical miles, of the position based on the type, quality, and resolution of the fix platform used.

Storm Movement Section details the current motion of the storm in knots or nautical miles per hour (1 knot=1.15 mph), with the direction expressed in terms of 16 compass points and to the nearest 5 degrees (true) of azimuth (e.g. 360°=N, 90°=E,

Minimum Central Pressure Section gives minimum central pressure of the storm in millibars. Whenever a storm is only threatening the U.S., the wind speed in km/hour is usually discontinued. Although central pressure is not a hazard, it can sometimes be an indicator of future changes in intensity. Strengthening oftentimes follows a decrease in pressure, while weakening generally follows an increase in the pressure.

Eye Size Estimate Section gives an estimate of the diameter (measured in nautical miles) of the eye of the tropical cyclone based on aircraft reconnaissance and/or radar data.

Max Sustained Wind, Wind Radii, and 4-Meter Wave Height Radii Section gives the maximum sustained one-minute wind speeds, gusts, and map coordinates that show the radial distance of the winds present in each wind force category: tropical storm force winds (34 knots), storm force winds (50 knots), and hurricane force winds (65 knots). The map coordinates are in compass directions radiating out from the center of the storm along the direction and distance in nautical miles as indicated. For example: **64 KT..... 40NE 35SE 30SW 40NW** means that winds of 64 knots (tropical storm force winds) are possible anywhere within the quadrant out to 40 nm (nautical miles) NE, 35 nm SE, 30 nm SW, & 40 nm NW, measured from the estimated center of the storm.

Repeat Section repeats the current center location and the location from the last advisory as a check against transmission errors and to assist mariners in charting the storm's movement. This section also contains the actual location of the storm 3 hours prior to the time of the advisory (in this case, the center at 1800Z (1800 hours) or 2PM EDT / 1PM CDT on the 10th was 21.9°N 61.4°W).

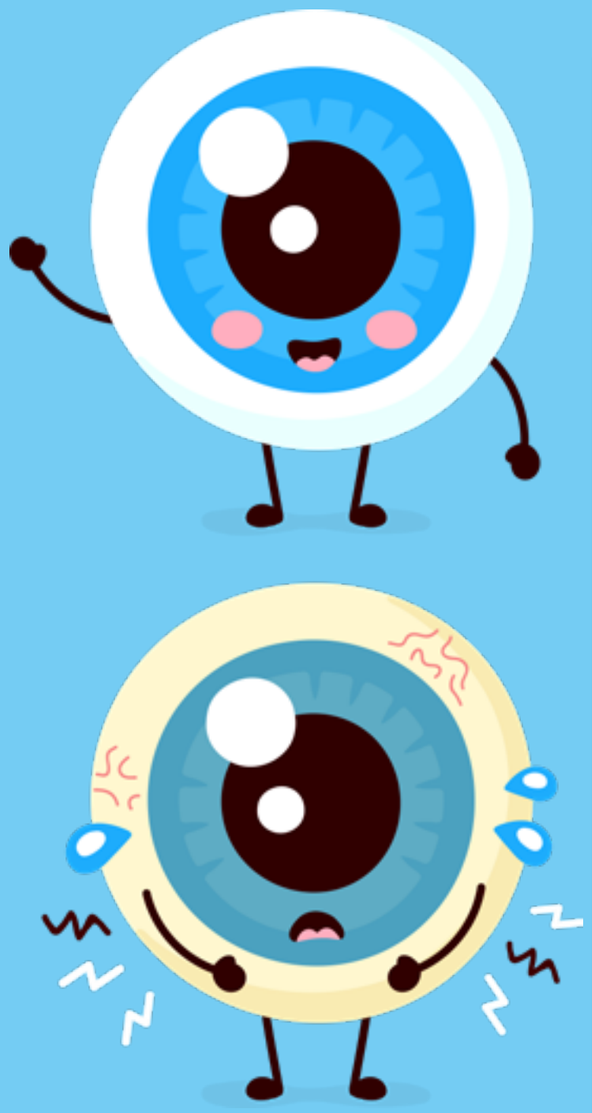
12- through 72-Hour Forecast Section give the 12, 24, 36, 48, 60, and 72-Hour forecast for the tropical cyclone's position, the max. sustained wind & gusts, and the estimated size of the wind field as per the Wind and Wave Radii section. As before, the map coordinates of the wind field are compass directions & radial distances out from the center of the storm in nautical miles.

90- & 120-Hour Forecast Sections give the 96 and 120-hour extended forecast for the tropical cyclone's position, the max. sustained wind and gusts, and an estimate of the size of the wind field using the same threshold wind values as in the Wind and Wave Radii section. As before, the map coordinates of the wind field are compass directions and radial distances out from the center of the storm in nautical miles. Additional notes on track errors are added for these forecasts. 34- and 50-knot radii are provided, if applicable.

Request for Ship Reports Section is a request for ship reports from any vessels in the general vicinity of the tropical cyclone.

Next Advisory Section gives the scheduled release time of the next advisory, which will always be 6 hours after the actual time of this product (i.e. 0300Z, 0900Z, 1500Z, and 2100Z).

MAY IS HEALTHY VISION MONTH



PROTECTING YOUR EYES
WHEN YOU LOOK AT SCREENS ALL DAY (AND INTO THE NIGHT)

Any type of "close-up work" (reading, needlecrafts, drawing, etc.) done for long stretches of time can cause eye strain, but digital screens have made this problem much more common -- and also much worse, as viewing screens places additional demands on the visual system.

People who use digital screens for several hours at a time are at risk for "computer vision syndrome," a group of symptoms such as:

- achy, tired eyes
- blurred vision, trouble focusing
- dry eyes, excessive tearing
- eyes that burn or sting
- headaches, neck & shoulder pain

These symptoms can be caused by a combination of factors, including poor lighting, digital glare, improper viewing distances, poor posture, and uncorrected vision problems.

The average American spends seven hours a day on a computer for work, not including additional time spent on smartphones, tablets, and digital television screens. What's a worker to do?

Thankfully, most symptoms disappear quickly after stopping digital screen use, but some people may experience longer-lasting issues like blurred distance vision. Luckily, there are ways to address the problem and relieve the symptoms.

Do a "hard reset." Remember the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Adjust your screen. It should be arm's length away, slightly below eye level. Adjust the screen brightness to match the level of light around you. Try increasing the contrast and the screen magnification.

Optimize lighting. Minimize glare by placing screens perpendicular to windows, closing blinds, adjusting lighting, or using a matte screen filter.

Blink! Humans normally blink about 15 times per minute, but only 5-7 times while using digital devices. Nudge yourself to remember to blink by putting a note that says "Blink!" in your workspace. Keep eye drops handy to use as needed, especially if you wear contact lenses, as they can cause or worsen dry eyes.

Practice good "eyegiene." Wash your hands regularly, and avoid rubbing or touching your eyes. Thoroughly remove makeup before bedtime. Contact lenses? Try to give your eyes a break from them at least part of the time, clean them regularly, and don't sleep in them (even if they say "extended wear").

Consider your eyewear. Having trouble focusing on the screen? Ask your doctor about computer glasses specifically designed for focusing on objects 20-26 inches away from the face (if you already wear glasses, progressive lenses can be added for this purpose).

Also consider lenses that filter out blue light, which has been known to cause a variety of issues, from eye strain to sleep disruption.

Wear safety glasses, goggles, or face shields to protect your eyes during activities that could cause injury from liquids, debris, foreign objects, or collision. And don't skip the sunglasses to block UV rays, even in cloudy weather.

ALLEVIATE EYE STRAIN WITH THESE SIMPLE EYE EXERCISES:

EYE YOGA

Close your eyes and place the palm of each hand over each cheekbone. Cup your hands over your eyes and breathe deeply for five minutes.

What it does: Reduces eye fatigue, relaxes facial muscles

PENCIL PUSH-UPS

Wear corrective lenses for near vision as needed. Hold a pencil at arm's length & focus on a letter printed on the side (or the eraser). Slowly move the pencil toward your nose, keeping the letter in focus. Pull it back to arm's length. Repeat several times.

What it does: Allows eye muscles to practice focusing on objects at different distances, trains eyes to converge when looking at near objects

FOCUS NEAR & FAR

Hold your thumb about 10 inches from your face and focus on it for 20 seconds. Shift your gaze to a target 20 feet away and hold your focus for 20 seconds; then return to your thumb. Repeat every 20 minutes.

What it does: Reduces eye fatigue, prevents dryness, allows eye muscles to practice focusing on objects at different distances

CONSCIOUS BLINKING

Squeeze your eyelids closed for two seconds, then open them. Repeat several times. Do this several times a day.

What it does: Stimulates oil glands in the eyelids, lubricates eyes, prevents dryness, soothes tired eyes

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

SAFE USE OF THE TOOLS THAT HELP US STEP UP WITHOUT FALLING DOWN

STEP STOOLS

OSHA General Industry Standard 1910.23(b)(3): Steps on step stools are spaced not less than 8 inches apart and not more than 12 inches apart, as measured between the centerlines of the steps. (4)(iv) Step stools have a minimum clear width of 10.5 inches.

OSHA Construction Standard 1926.1053(a)(3)(ii): Rungs, cleats, and steps of step stools shall be not less than 8 inches apart, nor more than 12 inches apart, as measured between center lines of the rungs, cleats, and steps.

LADDERS

OSHA General Industry Standard 1910.23(b)(9): Ladders are inspected before initial use in each work shift, and more frequently as necessary, to identify any visible defects that could cause employee injury.

OSHA General Industry Standard 1926.1053(b)(15): Ladders shall be inspected by a competent person for visible defects on a periodic basis and after any occurrence that could affect their safe use.

CHOOSING & USING STEP STOOLS

Every employee needs a boost sometimes, regardless of the type of workplace or the type of job they do -- whether it's hanging a picture, reaching something from a high shelf, changing a lightbulb, or even just climbing the stairs into the building. Step stools, ladders, and staircases may not be used by every employee on a daily basis, but every employee should have access to the right tools and know how to use them safely if and when the need arises.

STEP AWAY FROM UNSAFE OPTIONS

We've all done it -- climbed on a chair or a table to reach something. Maybe we didn't know where to find a step stool, maybe we were in a hurry, or maybe we just thought "it's no big deal -- it will be fine."

NEVER stand on a chair (with or without wheels), table, or desk. Why?

Even if they are sturdy, tables and chairs are not properly balanced to hold a person's shifting weight and can easily tip over. Plus, the distance between the surface and the floor is too large to step up and down safely; the most common injuries (twisted ankles and falls) occur when people attempt to step down from tables and chairs.

Remember, **you are not the exception to safety rules.** No one thinks they will be the one injured until it happens to them, and it happens more frequently than we may realize. Don't be tempted to stand on anything other than a ladder or step stool; use the right tool or find someone with the skills and equipment to do the task for you.

Safety professionals -- remember people's tendency to take risks by cutting corners to save time. A step stool is much more affordable than the cost of an employee standing on and falling from a chair. Ensure stepstools are available to employees and placed in convenient and visible locations; just being aware that tools are available can help nudge employees into using them. Hanging a poster in the workplace (like the one on the following page) can help.

STEP STOOLS

A step stool is any portable platform under 32 inches tall that is used to reach higher places. They come in a variety of options, including type of material (plastic, wood, fiberglass, or metal), number of steps (no more than three), and adjustability (foldable or not). Look for additional safety features such as non-slip rubber feet, locking latches, hand rails, extra-wide steps, and built-in trays. Make sure the step stool you choose is the right height and can be set up safely on the type of surface where it is needed.

MAINTENANCE & USE

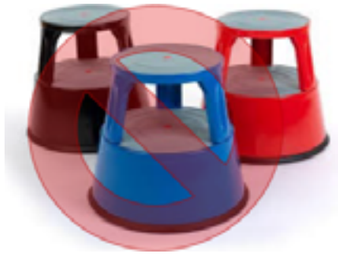
Step stools need regular maintenance and inspection and require precautions just like any other climbing apparatus. (See OSHA standards regarding step stools & ladders above.)

Inspection:

- Check for structural damage, split or bent rails, loose bolts, missing non-slip feet, or any other damage that might deem them unsafe.
- Make sure the step stool is sturdy and can stay flat on the floor without wobbling.
- Remove damaged stools from service immediately by placing a "DO NOT USE" tag on them (just as you would for a full-size ladder) and report the hazard to a supervisor or maintenance personnel.

Set Up & Use:

- Check the floor for water, grease, or other slip hazards.
- Set up the stool so that it faces the work without having to twist. Reposition the stool instead of twisting or leaning your body.
- Position your feet in the middle of the steps.
- Always face forward when climbing up or down.



Rolling step stools like these (also called "kick stools") are NOT recommended for office use because they lack stability and tip easily, especially on smooth floors, as they don't always maintain three points of contact.

PORTABLE LADDER SAFETY

According to Liberty Mutual's 2020 Workplace Safety Index, $5.71 billion is spent on workplace falls from ladders and platforms.

The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons reported that in 2023, 500,000 people were treated for ladder-related injuries, 300 of which proved fatal.

About 40% of all ladder accidents occur while using an extension ladder, most commonly due to improper use of settings or locking devices.

CHOOSING A LADDER

There's a ladder made for every task and situation -- make sure you are using the right one.

DESIGN & HEIGHT

- Straight -- a single frame 4-30 feet long with no extensions or hinges; must be supported by a wall and anchored at the top. Used for outdoor projects.
- Step ladder -- typically 4, 6, 8, or 10 feet long, its self-supporting A-frame design can be used anywhere. Ideal for indoor & small outdoor projects such as painting & simple maintenance.
- Multipurpose ladder -- multiple hinges allow ladder to be bent into different shapes, making it useful as a step ladder, straight ladder, or even scaffolding.
- Mobile folding ladder -- folds for storage like a step ladder, but with adjustable height (max. around 21 feet). Many have wheels for portability, extra-wide stair-like rungs, and side railings for more safety. Ideal for tasks that require frequent readjustment of placement (such as stocking storage shelves) or as temporary stairs.
- Extension ladder -- multiple sections adjust to different lengths, ranging from 32-72 feet; must be supported by a wall. Used for exterior maintenance or roofing.

MATERIAL

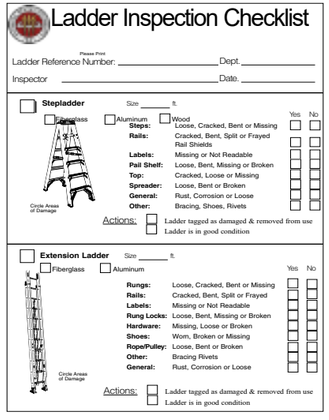
- Ladders made of aluminum are lightweight and corrosion-resistant, but conduct electricity and can't be used for electrical work.
- Wooden ladders are non-conductive and affordable, but heavy and deteriorate if exposed to the elements.
- Fiberglass ladders are durable and can be used for electrical work, but also heavy and expensive.

DUTY RATING

Check the rating sticker on the side of the ladder before use. Weight limits include the total weight of the person, their clothing, and any equipment they will be carrying.

- TYPE III: Light-duty, max 200 lbs
- TYPE II: medium-duty, max 225 lbs
- TYPE I: heavy-duty, max 250 lbs
- TYPE 1A: extra heavy-duty, max 300 lbs
- TYPE 1AA: super duty, max 375 lbs

FSU has developed a robust portable ladder safety program that establishes training and standard procedures for all employees who use ladders or stepstools more than three feet in height. The program guidelines can be found in **PDF on their website,** complete with the **portable ladder inspection checklist shown here.**



Ladder Inspection Checklist

Please Print
Ladder Reference Number: _____ Dept. _____
Inspector _____ Date. _____

Stepladder Size _____ ft. — Fiberglass — Aluminum — Wood

		Yes	No
Steps:	Loose, Cracked, Bent or Missing		
Rails:	Cracked, Bent, Split or Frayed Rail Shields		
Labels:	Missing or Not Readable		
Pail Shelf:	Loose, Bent, Missing or Broken		
Top:	Cracked, Loose or Missing		
Spreader:	Loose, Bent or Broken		
General:	Rust, Corrosion or Loose		
Other:	Bracing, Shoes, Rivets		

Circle Areas of Damage

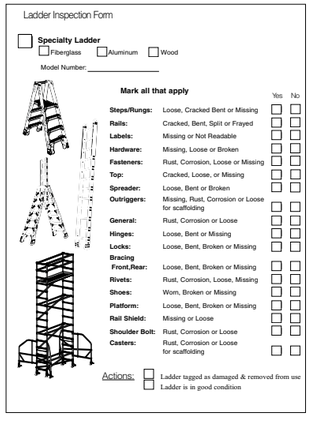
Actions: ☐ Ladder tagged as damaged & removed from use ☐ Ladder is in good condition

Extension Ladder Size _____ ft. — Fiberglass — Aluminum

		Yes	No
Rungs:	Loose, Cracked, Bent or Missing		
Rails:	Cracked, Bent, Split or Frayed		
Labels:	Missing or Not Readable		
Rung Locks:	Loose, Bent, Missing or Broken		
Hardware:	Missing, Loose or Broken		
Shoes:	Worn, Broken or Missing		
Rope/Pulley:	Loose, Bent or Broken		
Other:	Bracing Rivets		
General:	Rust, Corrosion or Loose		

Circle Areas of Damage

Actions: ☐ Ladder tagged as damaged & removed from use ☐ Ladder is in good condition



Ladder Inspection Form

Specialty Ladder ☐ Fiberglass ☐ Aluminum ☐ Wood

Model Number: _____

Mark all that apply

		Yes	No
Steps/Rungs:	Loose, Cracked Bent or Missing		
Rails:	Cracked, Bent, Split or Frayed		
Labels:	Missing or Not Readable		
Hardware:	Missing, Loose or Broken		
Fasteners:	Rust, Corrosion, Loose or Missing		
Top:	Cracked, Loose, or Missing		
Spreader:	Loose, Bent or Broken		
Outriggers:	Missing, Rust, Corrosion or Loose for scaffolding		
General:	Rust, Corrosion or Loose		
Hinges:	Loose, Bent or Missing		
Locks:	Loose, Bent, Broken or Missing		
Bracing Front,Rear:	Loose, Bent, Broken or Missing		
Rivets:	Rust, Corrosion, Loose, Missing		
Shoes:	Worn, Broken or Missing		
Platform:	Loose, Bent, Broken or Missing		
Rail Shield:	Missing or Loose		
Shoulder Bolt:	Rust, Corrosion or Loose		
Casters:	Rust, Corrosion or Loose for scaffolding		

Actions: ☐ Ladder tagged as damaged & removed from use ☐ Ladder is in good condition

OSHA estimates that falls from ladders account for around 20% of fatal & lost workday injuries, most of which would be prevented by complying with safety standards. Ladder safety violations ranked #3 on OSHA's top 10 for 2024.

OSHA has provided this Quick Card on Portable Ladder Safety. Click the link to download the PDF, or print the copy on this page.

OSHA® QUICK CARD™

Portable Ladder Safety

Falls from portable ladders (step, straight, combination and extension) are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries.

- Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- Avoid electrical hazards! – Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.

3-Point Contact

- Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing (see diagram).
- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
- Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.

(continued on reverse)

- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
- An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support (see diagram). Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.

- The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface (see diagram).
- A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

For more information:
OSHA® Occupational Safety and Health Administration
U.S. Department of Labor
www.osha.gov (800) 321-OSHA (6742)

OSHA 3240 10/09 05

ASCENDING & DESCENDING STAIRS

Stairway accidents are the second leading cause of accidental injury, behind motor vehicle crashes.

Over one million injuries and 12,000 deaths occur each year as the result of stairway falls.

The more frequently we do something, the less dangerous it seems -- a phenomenon known as **risk compensation** (see our July-Sept 2024 issue of OUTLOOK). It can be easy to overlook the dangers associated with stairs, especially if we use them multiple times every day. This type of complacency is what allows accidents to happen.

THE STATISTICS

Here at DRM, we see first hand how many employees are injured on stairs at work -- 30 workers' compensation claims in January 2025 alone. Of those reports:

- 21 occurred while walking DOWN stairs; 9 occurred while walking UP
- 2 involved wet steps
- 5 involved employees carrying items (one stating "with no field of vision")
- 1 occurred during a fire drill
- 1 involved clothing (a heel caught on a pant leg cuff)
- 8 involved slips or trips that caused injuries without a fall occurring (one resulting in a broken femur!)

UNSAFE BEHAVIOR

Most people injured on stairs aren't doing anything particularly dangerous. It's what they aren't doing that causes accidents -- namely, not practicing **situational awareness**. Simply paying attention on stairs can make all the difference.

Common behaviors that lead to stair accidents:

- Multitasking (e.g., reading, talking, etc.) while using stairs
- Running or skipping steps
- Wearing shoes that have slippery soles or don't fit properly
- Wearing clothing that can cause a trip hazard (e.g., pants or dresses that are too long)
- Carrying too many items (restricts handrail use)
- Carrying items that are too heavy (can result in loss of balance)
- Carrying items that are too large (obscures field of vision)

Don't assume you are safe from harm just because you aren't behaving in an unsafe manner. Remember that the possibility for an accident exists every time you use stairs. There might be hidden slip or trip hazards; you could step wrong, have a joint "go out," or just lose your balance. The handrail is there to help keep you from falling if these things happen. Keep at least one hand free so you can use it every time.

UNSAFE CONDITIONS

The responsibility of making sure stairs in the workplace are safe belongs to every employee. Remove or report hazards as soon as they are discovered.

Common stairway hazards:

- Slippery surfaces (lack of traction)
- Edges of stairs that are difficult to see (can cause tripping)
- Liquids or debris on stairs (can cause slipping)
- Loose carpets, rugs, or boards
- Objects blocking stairs
- Inadequate lighting
- Lack of proper handrails

MAKING STAIRS SAFE

Stairway accidents can cause severe injuries and even death, which is why building codes for stairs and ramps are so rigorous, with specific requirements for riser height, step width, tread depth, and handrail placement. Obviously most of us have little control over the construction of the stairways we use, but being aware of what makes a stairway safe can help us to recognize hazards such as missing or broken steps, loose handrails, slippery surfaces, or corrosion.

- Stairs should have non-slip surfaces, such as rubber, or be protected by slip-resistant paint and/or grip strips (tread tape).
- Leading edges of stairs should be made more visible with brightly-colored paint or tape, or affixed with stair noses or treads.
- Carpets on stairs should be in good condition (not fraying or lifting) and should not have distracting patterns.
- Stairways need to be well-lit at an angle that allows for perception of stair depth.
- Stairs and landings must be kept clean and free of liquids, debris, or obstructions. Never use stairways as a storage place, even temporarily.
- Handrails must be accessible and usable -- do not obstruct their use with decorative items such as lights or garlands.
- Do not place rugs on landings (tripping hazard).

Hanging signs (such as this one) near stairs can help nudge users to ascend and descend them safely.

Three months after placing a chalk outline at the bottom of their stairwell, one company observed an increase in handrail usage of more than 10%.

Are you making these ladder safety mistakes?

Check out the list.

February 23, 2025 | Alan Ferguson

Photo: Westend61/gettyimages

1 Not determining if a ladder is the safest equipment for the job

In certain cases, it might be best to use a different piece of equipment. For example, a scissor lift can allow workers to use both hands, or the lift can move people more efficiently from spot to spot during a job. This is why it's important to perform a job hazard or task hazard analysis to determine which equipment is the safest option for the task.

2 Not choosing the right ladder

One example: Selecting a ladder that's too short can cause workers to climb to an unsafe level to reach something (more on this later). Another: Anyone working near power lines shouldn't use a ladder made of a conductive material such as aluminum. Instead, they should choose one made of nonconductive materials such as wood or fiberglass.

3 Failing to inspect a ladder before use It's vital to catch issues such as broken rungs or other damage beforehand. If a ladder is damaged, OSHA requires employers to place a "Do Not Use" tag, or a tag with similar language, on the ladder and take it out of service. Also, make sure the ladder is free of mud, snow, or other debris that could cause a user to slip or fall.

4 Not knowing the proper angle

When placing a ladder against a wall or any other kind of vertical surface, it should be set up at a proper angle, according to OSHA and others. To do so, set the base a quarter "of the working length of the ladder" away from the wall or vertical surface. So, if it's a 4-foot ladder, place it 1 foot away from the wall. If it's an 8-foot ladder, place it 2 feet away from the wall. This way, the ladder will be at an optimal 75-degree angle.

5 Not using at least three points of contact Three points of contact is generally accepted as two feet and one hand or one foot and two hands. Those three points of contact will help maintain stability while on a ladder and provide a safeguard against the most hazardous situation: falls from height.

6 Carrying items Attempting to climb a ladder while holding tools or other objects can cause workers to lose their balance, which could lead to a fall. The American Ladder Institute recommends using towlines, a tool belt, or an assistant to "convey materials so that the climber's hands are free when climbing."

7 Leaning or reaching out beyond the ladder rails to perform a task Doing so can cause workers to lose their balance and potentially fall. One general rule is the "belt buckle rule." That means keeping your belt buckle between the side rails. Instead of reaching or leaning out to one side or the other, get down from the ladder and move it to the proper spot.

8 Not knowing OSHA's most-cited ladder violation When a portable ladder is used to access an "upper landing surface," OSHA requires that ladder to extend at least 3 feet above that upper landing surface. That's covered under 1910.23(c)(11) and the first part of 1926.1053(b)(1).
In the 1926 construction regulation, OSHA also requires that, when an extension isn't possible because of the length of the ladder, that it shall be secured at its top to a "rigid support" and a grasping device be provided to employees who are mounting or dismounting the ladder. Finally, "In no case shall the extension be such that ladder deflection under a load would, by itself, cause the ladder to slip off its support."

9 Standing on top -- or near the top

Likewise, using the top or a top step of a stepladder is an OSHA violation under 1926.1053(b)(13) and 1910.23(c)(8). Also, the agency advises not using the top three rungs on single, straight or extension ladders. Doing either can increase the risk for a fall, injury, or fatality.

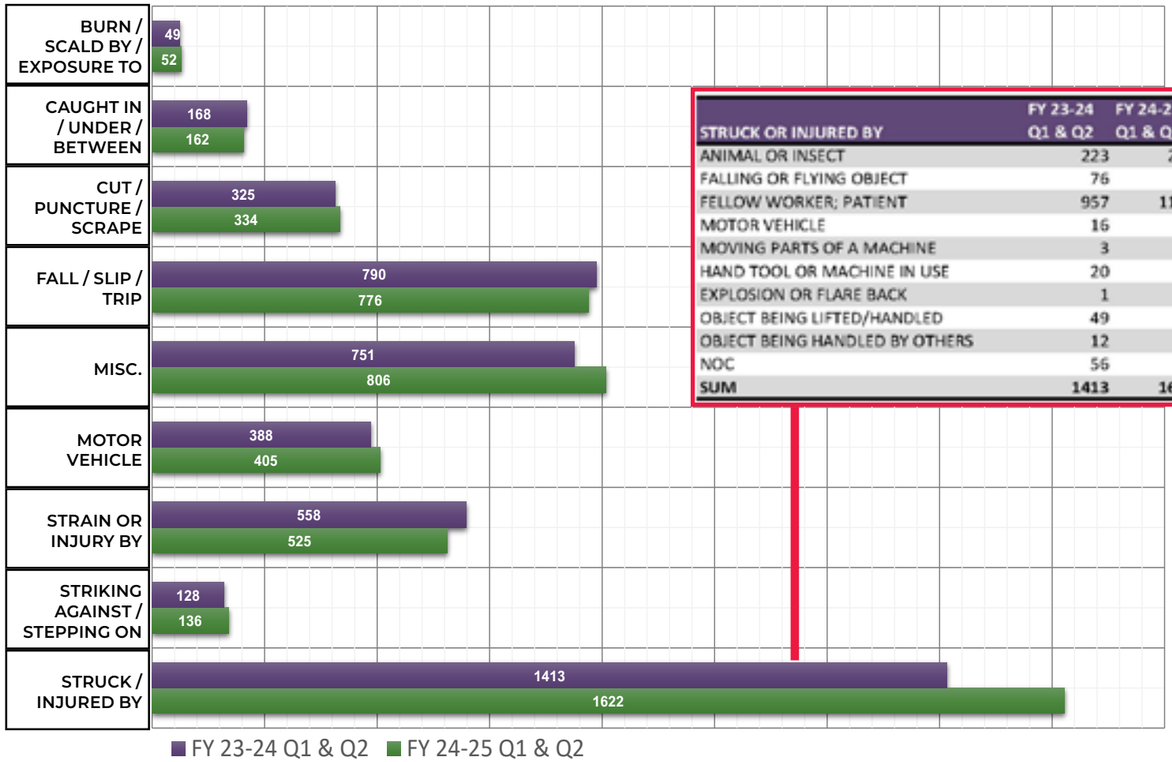
10 Not using a ladder for its intended purpose This was another one of OSHA's more frequent citations under 1926.1053 in FY 2024 (310). Some examples, according to a toolbox talk from the Utah Plumbing and Heating Contractor's Association: using a ladder as a brace, gangway, plank, platform, scaffold, or material hoist.

Originally published in Safety + Health Magazine
nsc National Safety Council

OUTLOOK SNAPSHOT

FISCAL YEAR 2023-24 & 2024-25 Q1 (JULY-SEPT) & Q2 (OCT-DEC) COMPARISON

STATE OF FLORIDA WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIM TRENDS



STRUCK OR INJURED BY	FY 23-24 Q1 & Q2	FY 24-25 Q1 & Q2
ANIMAL OR INSECT	223	250
FALLING OR FLYING OBJECT	76	64
FELLOW WORKER; PATIENT	957	1135
MOTOR VEHICLE	16	32
MOVING PARTS OF A MACHINE	3	4
HAND TOOL OR MACHINE IN USE	20	17
EXPLOSION OR FLARE BACK	1	2
OBJECT BEING LIFTED/HANDLED	49	37
OBJECT BEING HANDLED BY OTHERS	12	10
NOC	56	71
SUM	1413	1622

Certain types of injuries occur more frequently at certain times of year (e.g., tick bites during tick season, etc.), so it can be helpful to see how the number of claims has changed during those periods from year to year. Here we see how claims from the first half of FY 2023-24 compares with that of FY 2024-25.

The number of claims in each category has remained relatively consistent between the two years, with the exception of an increase in the "STRUCK / INJURED BY" category. The purple table overlaid on the graph depicts the "STRUCK / INJURED BY" category broken out by cause codes, which shows significant increases in the categories "Animal or Insect," "Fellow Worker/ Patient," and "Motor Vehicle" (the latter being workers struck by motor vehicles, not those involved in motor vehicle crashes).

In the next issue, we will look at claims for Q3 of FY 2024-25, followed by a fiscal year wrap-up.

PURPLE BARS show the number of claims reported in each category for the first two quarters of FY 2023-24 (July-December 2023).

GREEN BARS show the number of claims reported in each category for the first two quarters of FY 2024-25 (July-December 2024).

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Division of Risk Management
200 E. Gaines St., Tallahassee FL 32399

Office of the Director 850-413-4700

State of Florida Loss Prevention Section
850-413-3121

Bureau of State Liability & Property Claims
850-413-3122

Bureau of State Employee Workers' Compensation Claims 850-413-3123

Safety Coordinator Appointment Form
850-413-3121

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