

# Nonfatal occupational injuries associated with slips and falls in the United States

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Received 4 May 2005; received in revised form 16 August 2005; accepted 19 August 2005

Available online 8 November 2005

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine nonfatal occupational injury data associated with slip and fall accidents by extracting the latest information from the database of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Systematic information on the cost and causes of industrial slip and fall accidents are not readily available from statistical and survey data sources, as such, detailed information regarding the slip/fall-related injuries in US industries categorized by various factors are presented in this study. Nonfatal injuries resulting in days lost from work due to fall and slip were categorized by the number and incidence rate by various characteristics such as major US industry, nature of injury, source of injury, types of fall, occupation, part of body injured, age of the injured, gender of the injured and number of lost workdays utilizing the BLS database. Additionally, cost per claim associated with industrial slip and fall accidents are reviewed using the National Safety Council database. This information may be used to focus our attention toward most relevant intervention strategies associated with workplace slip and fall accidents.

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**Keywords:** Fall; Slip; Nonfatal occupational injury and illness

## 1. Introduction

In spite of advances in automation technologies to reduce the workload, industrial workers are often faced with work-related injuries leading to 1 or more days away from work. Slip and fall accidents have been recognized as a major threat to the safety of individuals not only in industry but also in daily living. However, a review of slip/fall losses reveals that, in addition to contributory negligence of the accident victims, there is often an action the property owner/management could have executed to reduce/prevent the severity of the fall incident (Pilla, 2003).

According to the 2002 annual report of science activity, “same level fall” and “fall to lower level” were cited as the two of the five leading injury causes accounting for 5 or more days away from work. Also, \$4.6 billion, that is, 11.5% of the direct cost disabling work place injuries (payments to injured workers and their medical care

providers for injuries or illnesses resulting in more than 5 days away from work) reported in 2002 was due to same level fall (Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety, 2002). Excluding motor vehicle accidents, fall was second only to poisoning as cause of unintentional injury death accounting for 14,500 deaths in 2002 (National Safety Council, 2002).

The BLS collects national data on nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses of employers in private industry by Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illness (SOII) and estimates the overall US occupational injury and illness experience. The BLS SOII classifies nonfatal injuries and illness resulting in work absences by nature, source, part of the body, age, gender, occupation, race and length of serve, etc. The data for years 1999 through 2001, presented in this paper, are based on the SOII that is shown with electronic files (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (1999–2001) maintains at its website). The various BLS tables were examined carefully to extract and compile injury statistics relevant to the fall and slip. In this paper, *slip* means the slips and trips without a fall, whereas, fall means the

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