

Loss

Control



FARMERS

Information Bulletin

Stairs, Steps, and Ramps

A recent National Safety Council report indicated 12,000 stair related deaths a year. With half of these being in the home and the rest in the business environment, this translates into the second highest accidental cause of death, second only to automobile accidents. It is important to keep in mind that in addition to these fatality accidents on stairs, there are even more that go unreported for a variety of reasons.

Stairs consist of steps for the foot and risers that take you up to the next level. There are standards for the construction of stairs that are designed to attain a uniform appearance from one establishment to another. The older the facility, the more deviation from the standard that can be found. Where at all possible, stairs in your facility should be at or as close to the standard as possible to reduce the potential of stair falls and injuries.

The steps should have a tread depth of 10 inches or more to accommodate the foot size of a majority of people. In addition, the tread should have a nose, an overhang above the step tread below. The nose overhang should be no more than 1-1/2 inches. Any longer and they become a trip hazard to users of the stairs. The riser for each step should be no more than 8-1/4 inches and no less than 4 inches. The optimum riser height is 4 inches.

Stairs need to be provided with handrails. The handrails need to be installed between 30 to 34 inches above the tread and include a 12 to 18 inch landing extension. The handrails are to be attached to the wall but away from the wall so that hands and fingers do not get caught between the handrail and the wall and cause an injury.

All stairs need to have proper lighting to assist patrons with negotiating the ascent or descent of the stairs. Lighting

needs to be provided at each landing area of the stairs.

Because of the frequency and the potential severity of falls from stairs, they need to receive priority attention and inspections on a regular basis. Defective conditions need to be corrected immediately.

Some of the conditions to watch for include worn, broken, or cracked step treads that could cause a fall. Broken nose edges can result in an uneven condition across the step. Loose or broken handrails are conditions that lead to falls and need to be corrected immediately.

Adding non-skid strips to each step will reduce the potential of stair falls. Older tiles on stairs can also become smooth and slick. This presents a significant slip and fall hazard. These tiles need to be removed and replaced with non-slip tiles.

Carpeted stairs and landings need to be in good condition with no tears or wrinkles in the carpet. Any frayed, loose, wrinkled or torn carpet must be repaired immediately in order to reduce potential of fall injuries.

If a condition requiring maintenance and repair is unable to be corrected immediately, signs need to be provided to warn users of the stairs of the potentially hazardous condition. Care must be taken that a stairway is not shut down completely since they are generally included in the building design as a means of getting out of the building in the event of an emergency.

Ramps are another entry/exit method that can be found on the interior or exterior of the building. They are used by persons with difficulties using stairs or who are unable to use stairs.

All ramps need to be inspected for the same defective conditions as for stair treads and handrails. In addition, ramps could be slippery either due to the finish or weather conditions. Ramps should have non-skid materials adhered to the surface, into the ramp coating, or grooved across the ramp perpendicular to the direction of travel. This will assist with reducing potential slips and falls on ramps.

By inspecting your stairs on a regular basis, you can identify developing conditions before they become major hazards. Correct on problems noted as soon as possible.

Following these guidelines will reduce the potential of stair accidents on your premises.