SKILLSIGNAL™
Construction Safety & Compliance

TOOLBOX TALK

Preventing Trips: The Cord You Stepped Over Forty Times Today

TOPIC NO.	DURATION	AUDIENCE
FP-03	10 to 15 min	All Crew

OSHA REFERENCE 29 CFR 1926.25 · 29 CFR 1926.56 · 29 CFR 1926.1052(c) · 29 CFR 1910.22

PROJECT / JOBSITE	DATE	PRESENTED BY

01 THE HOOK

START HERE

Walking is harder than it looks. Lift one foot, swing it exactly far enough, put it down, catch your balance, repeat with the other one, hundreds of times an hour, without thinking about any of it. Your body runs on autopilot. A trip is what happens when something stops your foot a few inches short of where autopilot told it to land. An extension cord. The lip of a floor box. A loose piece of carpet. You stepped over that cord forty times today. The forty-first time, you were carrying a bundle of conduit and looking at your phone.

02 WHY A TRIP IS WORSE THAN IT SOUNDS

A trip throws you **forward**, which means you land on your hands, your knees, or your face. Carrying something, you land on the thing you were carrying. Near an edge, a floor opening, or a stairway, a trip on flat ground turns into a **fall to a lower level**, the category that kills more than 650 workers a year. Among construction workers, slips and trips that never even became a fall still send people home at a rate of **5.7 per 10,000 workers** every year.

OSHA's rule is housekeeping. **29 CFR 1926.25(a)**: form and scrap lumber with protruding nails and all other debris must be **kept cleared from work areas, passageways, and stairs**. **29 CFR 1910.22(a)**

(3): walking surfaces must be free of hazards such as **sharp or protruding objects, loose boards, corrosion, leaks, spills, snow, and ice**. If you can trip on it in a walkway, it is a citation waiting to happen.

03 THE SEVEN RULES

RULE 1

NOTHING CROSSES A WALKWAY

Extension cords, air hoses, welding leads, water lines: **route them overhead or along the wall**, not across a path. If crossing is truly unavoidable for a short time, cover it with a cord ramp or flag it with cones so it is impossible to miss. Then get it out of there.

RULE 2

MATERIALS DO NOT LIVE ON THE FLOOR

Bags, boxes, buckets, and tools set down “for a second” in a walkway are a trip hazard for everybody who did not watch you set them there. Put it on a bench, in a cart, or against the wall. **Never in the path.**

RULE 3

REPORT BROKEN SURFACES

Chipped concrete, missing tiles, carpet edges lifting, a plywood deck seam with a lip. Flag it immediately so nobody hits it, then report it to the supervisor so it gets fixed, not just noticed.

RULE 4

SCOUT BEFORE YOU CARRY

If a load blocks your view of the floor, **walk the route empty first**. Move anything in the way. Then carry. Your feet cannot avoid what your eyes cannot see.

RULE 5

HAND ON THE RAIL, GOING UP AND DOWN

Catching a toe on a stair tread is the classic trip. **29 CFR 1926.1052(c)** requires a handrail on any stairway with **four or more risers or rising more than 30 inches**. Grip it. Up and down.

RULE 6

DO NOT WALK IN THE DARK

29 CFR 1926.56 sets a minimum of **5 foot-candles** for general construction areas, corridors, and exitways (3 foot-candles for excavation and waste areas). If you cannot see the floor, turn on the lights, bring a light, or do not walk there. Report burned-out lamps.

RULE 7

NEVER WALK BACKWARD

Pulling a cart, backing away from a wall, stepping back to look at your work. You cannot see what is behind you, and a backward trip is the hardest fall to recover from. **Turn around.**

04 WALKWAY CHECKLIST

Before the crew starts, walk the main path and check:

- ☐ No cords, hoses, or leads crossing any designated walkway without a ramp or cover.
- ☐ No materials, tools, or debris in passageways, on stair treads, or on landings.
- ☐ No protruding nails, rebar, or form ties at foot level along the path.
- ☐ Floor openings covered, secured, and marked (**29 CFR 1926.502(i)**).
- ☐ All stairways with four or more risers have a handrail in place and secure.
- ☐ Lighting on and working in every corridor, stairwell, and work area.
- ☐ Floor surfaces intact: no lifted carpet edges, broken tiles, or deck plate lips.

⚠ **A TRIP NEAR AN EDGE IS A FALL**

Trip hazards within six feet of an unprotected edge, a floor opening, or the top of a stairway are not housekeeping problems. They are fall hazards. Treat them with the same urgency as a missing guardrail: stop, clear it, then work.

05 WHY IT MATTERS

[JOBSITE]

FOR THE CREW

A clean walkway is faster to move material through, easier to inspect, and the first thing an OSHA compliance officer looks at when they walk through the gate. Housekeeping citations under 1926.25 are easy to write and easy to avoid.

[INDIVIDUAL]

FOR YOU

The forward fall from a trip lands you on your wrists and knees. A broken wrist takes a tradesman out for eight to twelve weeks. Stepping over that cord one more time is not a skill. It is a bet.

[HOME]

FOR LIFE OFF-SITE

Garage floors, extension cords for the holiday lights, the rug at the bottom of the stairs, the dark hallway at 2 a.m. Falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injuries treated in U.S. emergency rooms. Same rules apply.

06 TODAY'S DRILL

TODAY'S DRILL **CLEAR ONE PATH**

Pick the walkway your crew uses most. Walk it right now and clear every trip hazard you find: cords, hoses, material, debris. Do not step over anything. Move it, ramp it, or flag it. Then count how many things you moved and tell the foreman the number. Tomorrow, walk it again and see how many came back.

07 CREW DISCUSSION

Take 2 minutes. Pick one.

1. Which cord, hose, or lead on this site gets stepped over the most? Why has nobody rerouted it?
2. Where on this site do people walk backward, or walk in the dark? What would it take to change that?
3. When did you last trip and catch yourself? What were you carrying, and what were you looking at?

08 ATTENDANCE & SIGN-OFF

All attendees confirm they participated in this Toolbox Talk and understand the content covered.

NAME (PRINT)	SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

_____ Date: _____

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