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INCIDENT ALERT

A laborer was tasked with snapping chalk layout lines on a metal deck. The deck was being prepared for the installation of reinforced concrete and had numerous welded metal stud fasteners (commonly called "Nelson studs") in place. In order to perform his work he needed to remove a stepladder from the area. As the worker was walking across the deck with the ladder in his hands he tripped on one of the studs and fell to his right knee. His kneecap struck an adjacent stud. He reported the injury to his supervisor and applied ice then took some anti-inflammatory medication, hoping that would ease the pain and swelling. He continued to work but his discomfort became worse. He again reported to his supervisor who transported him to a nearby medical facility where he was diagnosed with a fractured kneecap. He was given a support brace and was released to return to restricted duty.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the investigation the initial discussion surrounded worker attentiveness. The issue is certainly valid in this instance, given that the worker had been in the work area and should have been aware that the studs were present. The investigation also identified that a task plan had not been developed by the worker. If the worker had been trained in hazard assessment and task planning and the expectation to develop a task plan been in place he may have identified the tripping hazards and been able to prevent the injury.

The discussion also included the practice of marking permanently installed tripping hazards. Some tripping hazards commonly found on construction sites include pipes, conduit, concrete equipment pads, bolts, and studs. Many organizations implement a best practice of identifying these hazards by painting them a contrasting color, installing high visibility guards, attaching flagging, or barricading the area. All of these methods result in calling attention to the tripping hazard. Using these methods assists the workers in increasing their own personal attention to the hazards and allows them to avoid the potential of suffering a fall.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ask your contractor about how they manage tripping hazards and the potential for slips, trips, and falls on their worksite. Ask about task planning and what their expectations for workers to develop these plans are. Ask how they hold their subcontractors accountable for the removal or marking of tripping hazards.

2. Look at the walk paths and work areas on your project. Are tripping hazards present? How are tripping hazards being addressed? Are workers in the area aware of the hazards and are they taking steps to mark, correct, or avoid them?

3. Share this Incident Alert with your contractor and ask them to share it with their workers.

REV. (DATE)