



Identifying and controlling hazards

Imagine being hard at work, when your manager asks for your help in announcing a product launch next week by hanging a banner along a busy hallway.

To get it posted as soon as possible, you gather tools and search for a ladder. Knowing that there is a small ladder in the office supply closet near that hallway, you get the ladder and head for the posting location. It is not until you are on the top step, with your arms fully extended, that the stepladder wobbles. You find yourself dropping tools, having to adjust the banner several times, and nearly falling from the ladder.

One common, unnecessary risk is the use of a ladder that is not matched to the job to be done. Work from stepladders ideally suited to the working height needed has inherent risks; standing on the top of a stepladder and overextending reach are unnecessary risks. Shortcuts like using the ladder closest to the work area may appear to save time and effort, but often result in injury and lost time.

Stepladders are useful where space is limited or congested. However, clutter or debris under one or more of the ladder feet will make them unstable during climbing and when in the working position. Scanning the area for any foreign objects and removing them before setting up the ladder can do much to reduce unnecessary risk and make the work to be done easier.

Many unnecessary risks in the workplace can be reduced with practices like the 5S Method, described on the next page.

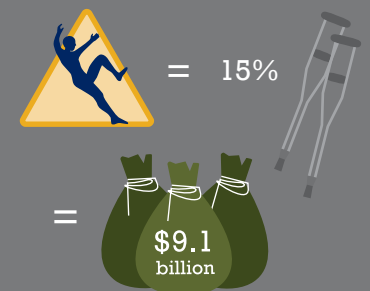
“Shortcuts... may appear to save time and effort, but often result in injury and lost time.”



In 2011, nearly **135,000 nonfatal same-level falls** occurred in private industry.¹



Slip, trip, and fall injuries are perennially ranked as the **most costly** workplace accidents.²



In 2014, same-level falls resulted in **15% of total injuries** and a cost of **\$9.1 billion**.

The 5S Method and Eliminating Risk

The 5S Method is widely used to improve efficiency in the workplace, and it can add significant value to your daily safety process.

The 5S Method steps are as follows:

- Sort:** Go through your work area and eliminate all unnecessary tools, unused parts/materials, and waste material. Keep only the essential items for what you need to do.
- Set in order:** Customize the work area to improve efficiency. Arrange tools in such a way that the most frequently used items are the easiest and quickest to locate. The purpose of this step is to eliminate time wasted obtaining the necessary items for a task.
- Shine:** Thoroughly clean the work area and the equipment. Keep it cleaned and organized. Following each shift, ensure everything is put back in its place.
- Standardize:** Create standard workstations for common jobs. Employees should be able to shift workstations and still be able to locate tools and supplies as if it were the original workstation.
- Sustain:** Once the first four S's are completed, the system should continuously operate this way. Maintain focus on this new organizational strategy.



Think about the risks that may be reduced by trying the 5S Method in your own work area.

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Takeaways

- Unnecessary risks are activities that are not part of the task but added due to a constraint within the workplace.
- Unnecessary risks can generally be identified during employer's inspections. When completing an inspection, use a checklist to help cover all areas.
- The 5S Method of eliminating risk encourages employees to keep a more effective workstation and reduces hazards from unneeded clutter.

- National Safety Council. (2014). Help prevent slips, trips and falls. *Safety + Health*. Retrieved from www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com
- 2016 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index.

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