Older Worker Safety: Experience Counts—So Do the Risks Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. **Slower Recovery Time:** Older workers experience longer healing periods after strains, sprains, or overexertion injuries, increasing the severity and impact of incidents.
2. **Reduced Balance & Stability:** Natural age-related changes—like reduced muscle mass and slower reflexes—raise the risk of slips, trips, and falls during routine tasks.
3. **Chronic Condition Interaction:** Arthritis, cardiovascular issues, or reduced joint flexibility can compromise lifting form, endurance, and reaction during physical tasks.
4. **Vision & Hearing Decline:** Reduced depth perception, glare sensitivity, or diminished hearing can affect hazard detection around vehicles, equipment, and alarms.
5. **Fatigue Accumulation:** Older workers may fatigue faster during prolonged or repetitive tasks, increasing the likelihood of errors or missteps late in a shift.
6. **Medication Side Effects:** Common prescriptions may cause dizziness, drowsiness, or slowed reaction time, affecting task performance and hazard perception.

STATS

- Workers aged 55 and older account for 20–25% of all workplace fatalities in the United States, despite being a smaller portion of the workforce (BLS, 2022).
- The fatal injury rate for workers 65 and older is nearly three times higher than the overall U.S. workforce average.
- In Canada, older workers experience fewer injuries overall but have much higher rates of serious and fatal injuries, especially from falls (CCOHS/WSIB).
- Slip-and-fall injuries among older Canadian workers have increased significantly, with workers 55+ representing more than 30% of fall-related claims.
- Injury severity increases with age: workers 60+ have the highest median days away from work, often exceeding 20 days per incident (BLS).
- Approximately 40% of fatal work-related falls in the U.S. involve workers over age 55, many occurring at heights under 15 feet (CDC/NIOSH).