Stairways & Ramps – The Forgotten Fall Zones in Facilities Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. **Wet or Polished Treads:** Cleaning residue, rainwater, or smooth finishes reduce traction on steps and ramps, causing sudden slips during ascent or descent
2. **Inconsistent Step Geometry:** Uneven riser heights or tread depths disrupt gait rhythm, increasing missteps and forward falls.
3. **Missing or Improper Handrails:** Absent, loose, or poorly placed handrails remove a critical balance aid when workers stumble or carry loads.
4. **Ramp Grade Stress:** Slopes that are too steep increase braking forces on descent and push forces on ascent, elevating fall and overexertion risk.
5. **Transition Hazards:** Door thresholds and floor material changes at stair or ramp landings create unexpected edges that trigger trips.
6. **Lighting & Glare Issues:** Shadows, glare, or insufficient illumination hide step edges and slope changes, delaying hazard recognition.
7. **Load Carrying:** Boxes, tools, or carts block sightlines and tie up hands, reducing balance and increasing fall severity on stairs and ramps.

STATS

- In Canada, slips and falls—including those on stairs and ramps—represent roughly 20% of lost-time injury claims across multiple provinces (provincial WCBs summarized by CCOHS).
- In the US, falls on stairs and ramps caused 69,050 days-away-from-work injuries in private industry in 2022, representing 26% of all fall-to-lower-level cases.
- Stairway falls have the highest median days away from work among fall types – 20 days per case in US private industry (2022-2024), far exceeding same-level falls.
- Falls on stairs account for nearly 1 million emergency room visits annually in the US, with workplaces contributing a significant portion through poorly maintained or unmarked stairways (2020-2024 average).
- In Ontario alone, stairway and ramp falls caused over 3,800 lost-time injuries annually (2020-2023), costing employers hundreds of millions in direct and indirect costs.
- Workers aged 55+ suffer stairway falls at twice the rate of younger workers and take 50% longer to recover (median 28 days away vs. 14 days).