

**SLIP AND FALL ACCIDENT
INVESTIGATIONS - AN
ENGINEERING PERSPECTIVE**

OCTOBER 31, 2012



Dr. Oren Masory



Dr. Carl Berkowitz

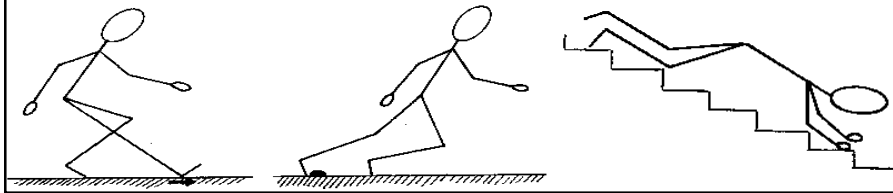
DEFINITIONS

Slip, Trip, Imbalance and Fall

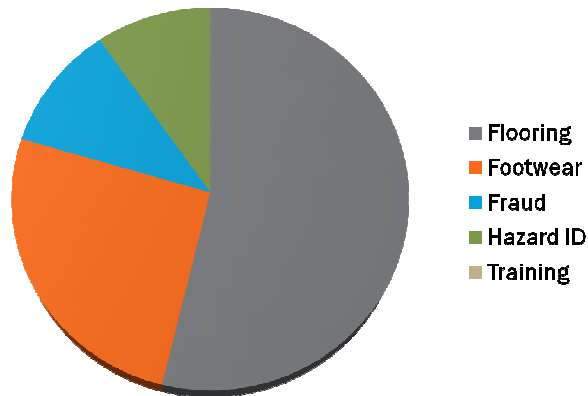
- ✓ Slip – Interaction between footwear and the walking surface
- ✓ Trip – Engagement with an object or irregular change in height along walking trajectory
- ✓ Imbalance – Stepping on unstable surface, like a loose tile, that cause instability
- ✓ Fall – An event that causes an individual to end up on the floor (ground)

STATISTICS

- Tens of thousands of pedestrians suffers slips, trips and imbalances each year and thousands occur each day.
- Cost of these injuries is in the billions of dollars per year.

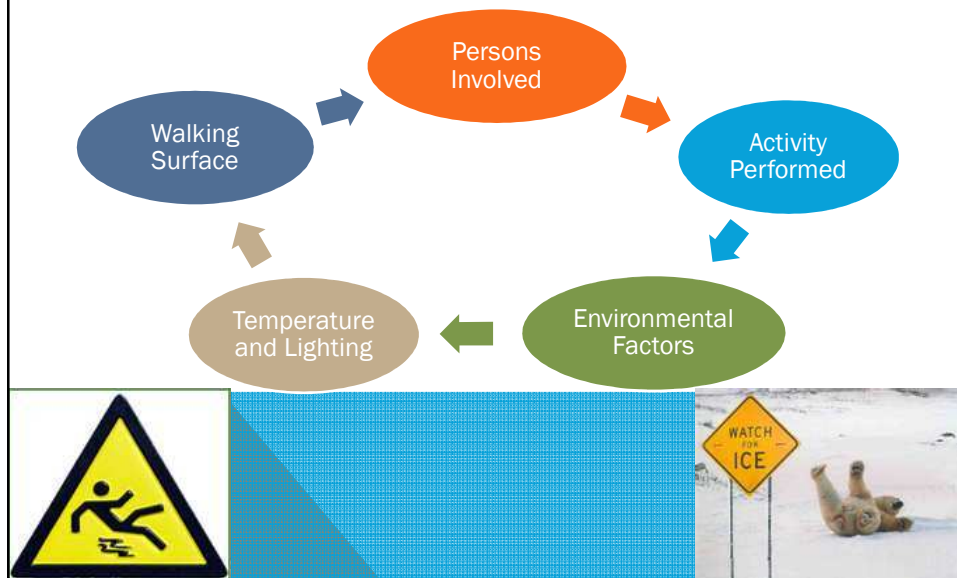


CAUSES OF SLIPS AND FALLS



Source: National Flooring Safety Institute

ACCIDENT FACTORS



FALLS

- ✓ Are commonplace affecting individuals from infant to old age
- ✓ Generally the outcome is no more serious than an embarrassment
- ✓ When injuries occur they can be debilitating and far-reaching



FALL PROBLEM

- Falls can occur on a level surface, on slopes, on steps, on stairs and from heights with different causes and results
- Falls involves a loss of balance due to some reason, which results in the person falling to the ground or another level



FALLS CATEGORIZED

- Circumstances (on the level, on a slope, on steps/stairs, from height)
- Age of the person (healthy adults, children, older persons)
- Place (hotel, terminal, parking area)



FALL FACTORS

Gait

Balance

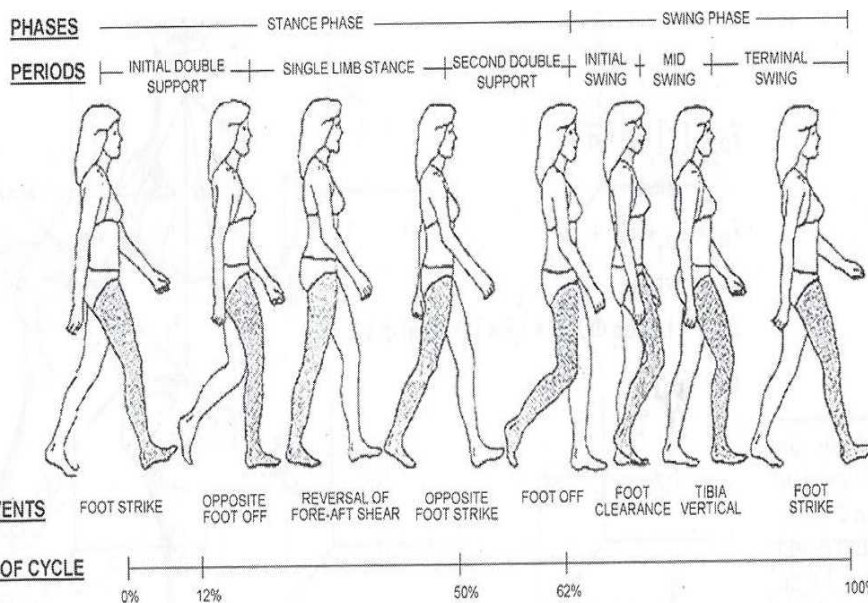
Stature

Strength

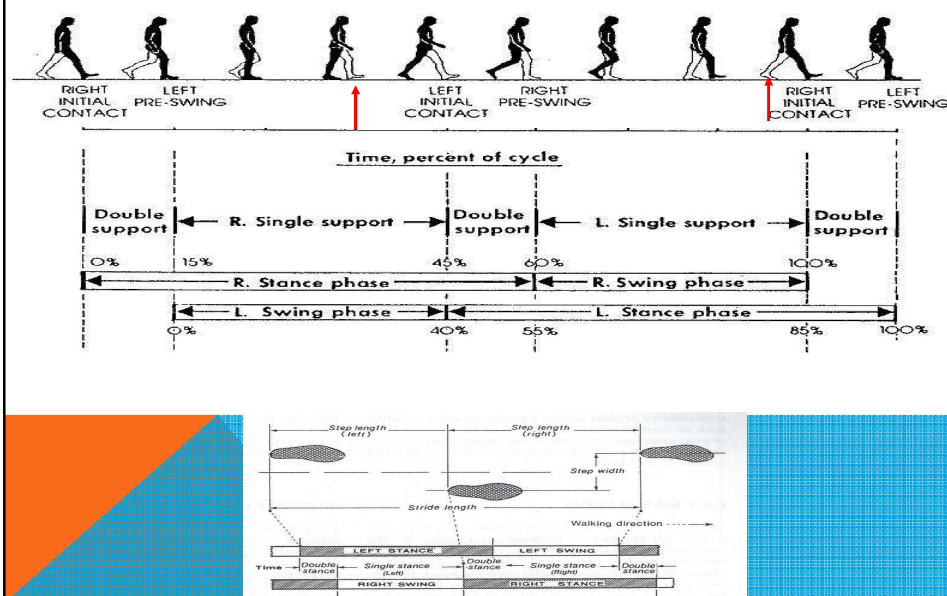
Vision

Behavior

NORMAL WALKING

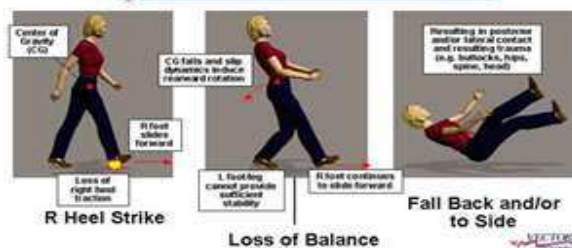


GAIT CYCLE



SLIP AND FALL DYNAMICS

Slip and Fall Dynamics



FALLS INFLUENCED BY

Health

Fatigue

Medication

Alcohol

Environment

Activity

FALL OUTCOMES

- Fall on the level – lower or upper limb fractures, sprains, back or head injuries.
- Falls from height – often serious, forces generated and severity depends on the distance of the fall and the contact surface.



SLIP AND FRICTION

SLIP FACTORS

- The most dominant factor effecting slip is the coefficient of friction between the footwear and the flooring material
- Walkway geometry
- Environmental conditions

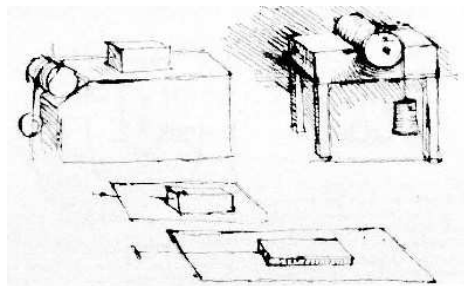


FRICTION - DEFINITION

The interaction between two surfaces in contact while moving one relative to the other while maintaining contact.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In 1495 Leonardo Da Vinci was the first to deduce the basic laws of friction and the causes of slips, trips and falls.



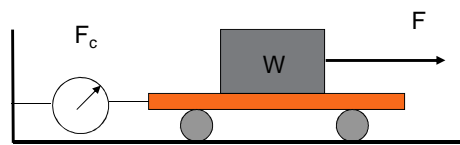
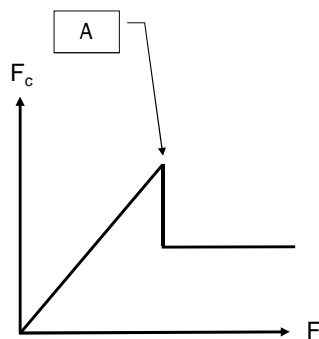
Da Vinci Friction
Machine

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In 1781 Charles – Augustin de Coulomb studied “Dry Friction”
- The interaction between two contacting surfaces in the absence of lubricating fluid.

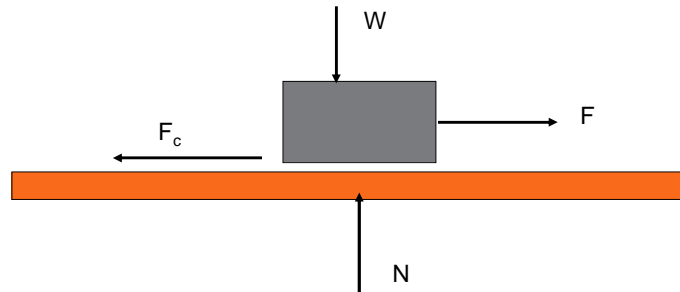


FRICTION - DEFINITION



At point A the block starts sliding on the surface

FRICTION - DEFINITION



FRICTION - DEFINITION

Only at point A the following relationship holds:

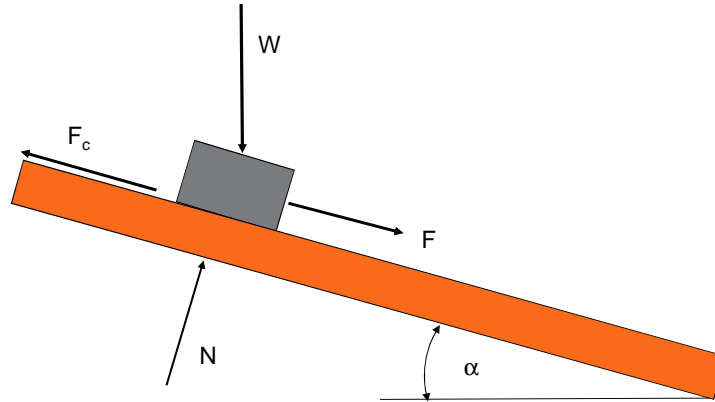
$$F_c = \mu_s W$$

where: F_c – Friction force
 μ_s – Static Coefficient of friction
 N – Normal force

The coefficient of friction is given by

$$\frac{F_c}{N} = \mu_s$$

FRICION - EFFECT OF SLOPE



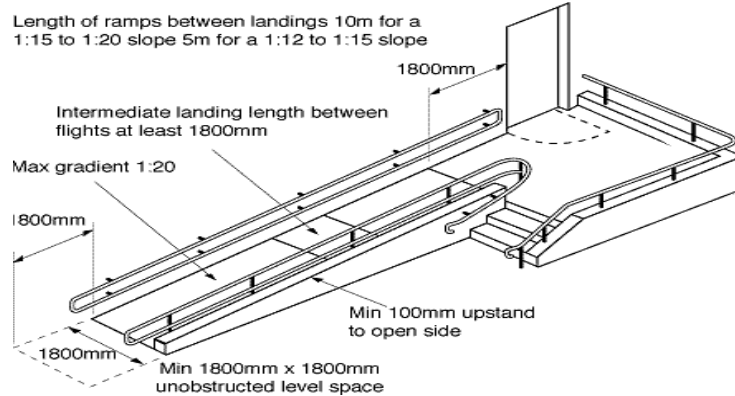
Equation still holds: $F_c = \mu_s N$
 Where: F_c – Friction force
 μ_s – Static Coefficient of friction
 N – Normal force

Coefficient of friction is given by:

$$\frac{F_c}{N} = \mu_s - \tan \alpha$$

Apparent coefficient of friction is reduced

FRICION - RAMP

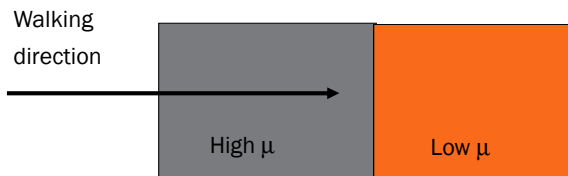


For a standard ramp of 1:20 the apparent coefficient

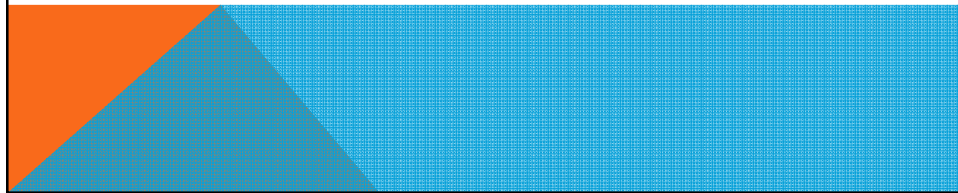
$$\frac{F_c}{N} = \mu_s - 0.05$$

This difference might change the conditions from safe to unsafe

FRICTION -EFFECT OF CHANGE IN COF



The transient from high to low coefficient of friction might cause slippage since human needs to take few steps to adjust their gait to the conditions.



FRICTION - EFFECT OF CHANGE IN COF



FRICITION - EFFECT OF CONTAMINATE



The presence of contaminants, such soil, reduces the value of the coefficient of friction since the particles change the mechanism from sliding to, at least, partial rolling.

FRICITION - EFFECT OF LOADS

The mean and standard deviation of dynamic friction of neolite

Glycerol	Test	Process 1		Process 2		Process 3		Process 4		Process 5		Process 6		Process 7	
		Mean	STD	Mean	STD	Mean	STD	Mean	STD	Mean	STD	Mean	STD	Mean	STD
0.99	1	0.342	0.114	0.271	0.033	0.213	0.047	0.262	0.060	0.156	0.050	0.127	0.027	0.161	0.045
	2	0.378	0.060	0.282	0.025	0.205	0.043	0.274	0.053	0.143	0.053	0.102	0.023	0.147	0.060
	3	0.322	0.063	0.205	0.034	0.163	0.037	0.199	0.055	0.123	0.038	0.104	0.011	0.122	0.036
	4	0.343	0.045	0.243	0.029	0.166	0.044	0.222	0.056	0.112	0.051	0.079	0.021	0.113	0.048
	5	0.301	0.058	0.195	0.031	0.154	0.032	0.198	0.042	0.113	0.029	0.100	0.015	0.119	0.027
	6	0.342	0.041	0.241	0.029	0.156	0.044	0.219	0.049	0.105	0.043	0.080	0.021	0.110	0.038
0.85	1	0.456	0.025	0.342	0.037	0.291	0.075	0.373	0.042	0.229	0.031	0.201	0.031	0.226	0.038
	2	0.466	0.018	0.344	0.035	0.275	0.059	0.371	0.046	0.212	0.035	0.181	0.031	0.211	0.033
	3	0.398	0.027	0.263	0.045	0.201	0.072	0.299	0.057	0.122	0.036	0.103	0.023	0.122	0.046
	4	0.418	0.023	0.296	0.038	0.210	0.064	0.317	0.054	0.148	0.037	0.116	0.028	0.138	0.039
	5	0.368	0.033	0.231	0.046	0.163	0.067	0.248	0.059	0.098	0.032	0.078	0.017	0.098	0.033
	6	0.390	0.026	0.268	0.037	0.174	0.064	0.279	0.056	0.113	0.037	0.087	0.027	0.108	0.036
0.7	1	0.570	0.080	0.486	0.032	0.443	0.050	0.541	0.041	0.360	0.051	0.428	0.036	0.402	0.031
	2	0.591	0.023	0.476	0.043	0.423	0.044	0.514	0.055	0.322	0.040	0.355	0.027	0.361	0.027
	3	0.422	0.084	0.335	0.036	0.313	0.021	0.386	0.046	0.183	0.026	0.270	0.033	0.232	0.024
	4	0.480	0.018	0.374	0.038	0.321	0.034	0.395	0.041	0.202	0.030	0.253	0.033	0.241	0.022
	5	0.403	0.020	0.286	0.036	0.256	0.015	0.324	0.037	0.125	0.024	0.203	0.022	0.169	0.023
	6	0.435	0.021	0.319	0.037	0.254	0.029	0.345	0.043	0.132	0.028	0.178	0.033	0.172	0.026
0.3	1	0.812	0.012	0.720	0.030	0.767	0.026	0.796	0.022	0.670	0.048	0.758	0.020	0.722	0.012
	2	0.800	0.010	0.718	0.031	0.740	0.020	0.729	0.025	0.615	0.040	0.701	0.030	0.677	0.021
	3	0.686	0.047	0.567	0.033	0.633	0.040	0.577	0.030	0.434	0.081	0.583	0.056	0.541	0.051
	4	0.681	0.024	0.587	0.035	0.583	0.032	0.613	0.032	0.448	0.035	0.525	0.055	0.529	0.046
	5	0.549	0.037	0.445	0.028	0.474	0.063	0.437	0.039	0.300	0.055	0.388	0.077	0.393	0.047
	6	0.531	0.050	0.462	0.032	0.443	0.062	0.472	0.046	0.264	0.066	0.321	0.126	0.348	0.032

Process number	Sand particles	Inlet pressure ($\times 10^5$ Pa)	Distance form nozzle (cm)	Test condition	Load (g)	Speed (cm/s)
1	00	2.76	5.1	1	100	10
2	1	2.76	5.1	2	250	10
3	BB	2.76	5.1	3	100	20
4	00	2.07	5.1	4	250	20
5	1	2.07	5.1	5	100	30
6	BB	2.07	6.4	6	250	30
7	BB	2.07	10.2			

FRICTION

Effect of
lubricant

The presence of lubricant, simple water, reduces the value of the coefficient of friction and therefore increases the chance for slippage.

Floor	DCOF
Dry ceramic	0.57
Dry steel	0.27
Oily plywood	0.43
Oily vinyl	0.11

FRICTION – CHEMICAL INTERACTION

Some surfaces are treated to be sticky. In this case the definition of coefficient of friction does not hold. Different methods have to be used to evaluate the slipping characteristic of the surface.

FRICTION - MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The consensus is that coefficient of friction in excess of 0.5 is safe and represent slip-resistant surface.

ADA specifies minimum value of 0.6 on
Surfaces accessible by handicap)

FRICTION - STANDARDS

Occupational Safety
& Health
Administration
(OSHA) 1918

Occupational Safety
& Health
Administration
(OSHA) 1915

American with
Disabilities
Accessibility
Guidelines (ADAAG)
15.2

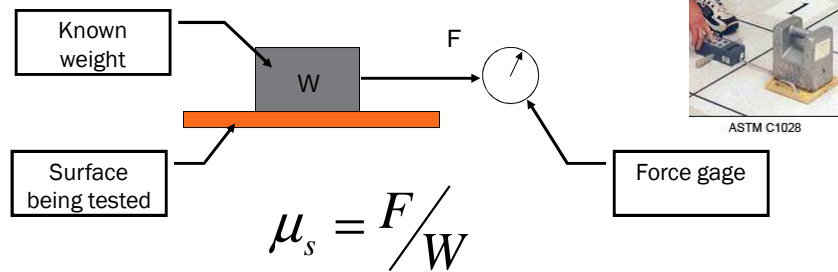
ASTM

National Fire
Protection
Association (NFPA)
415/417

State and Local
Building Codes

FRICTION - MEASUREMENTS

➤ ASTM C-1028 – Pull test



System has to be calibrated using a STANDARD tile

FRICTION - MEASUREMENTS

➤ ASTM C-1028 – Calibration



FRICTION - MEASUREMENTS

ASTM has many standards related to friction measurements for variety of cases

B-460

B-461

B-526

C-808

D-1894

D-2047

D-2394

D-2714

many more

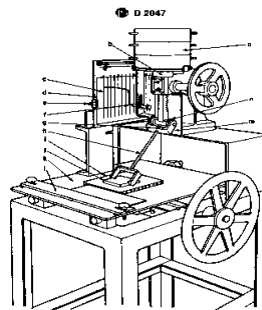
The expert has to pick up the relevant standard for the particular case.

FRICTION - MEASUREMENTS

ASTM E 303 – British
pendulum tester



ASTM F 489 –
James Machine



ASTM F 1677 –
Brungraber Mark II



Good for lab
environment

FRICTION - MEASUREMENTS



ASTM F 1679 –
English XL
Standard was
dismissed due to
poor repeatability

FRICTION - MEASUREMENTS



FRICTION - MEASUREMENTS

Difficulties

- ✓ Sticktion in wet condition
- ✓ Local factors affect the measurement
- ✓ Surface was treated after the event
- ✓ No standard for statistical analysis

TRIP

TRIP FACTORS

- Height of the obstacle which interfere with the swing
- Visibility
- Color of the obstacle

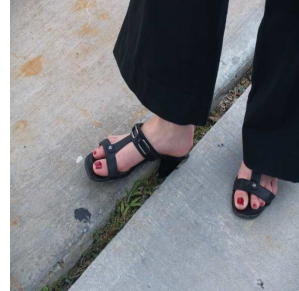
TRIP MECHANISM

- At the impact instant the body has linear momentum that is being interrupted by the impact.
- Body is supported by one foot and it is easy to lose balance
- The center of gravity of the body is ahead of the tripped leg and there is a moment that causes the fall.

TRIP LOCATIONS



Thermal Expansion Joints (Walkways)



Cracks or Wide Unfilled Joints

TRIP LOCATIONS



Sidewalk Breakage



Sidewalk Irregularity

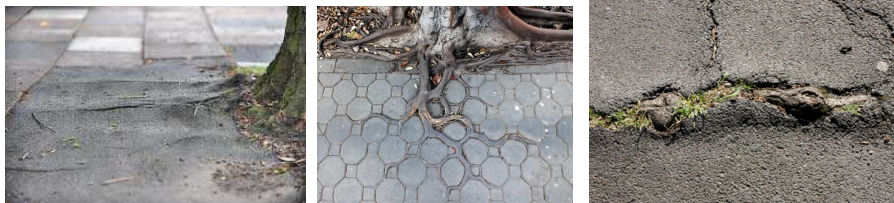
TRIP LOCATIONS

Transition between two
different surfaces



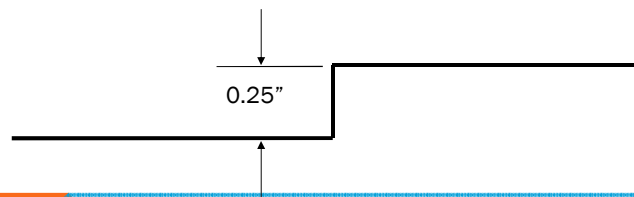
TRIP LOCATIONS

Roots penetrate the surface of the pavement



TRIP - MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The requirement is the height difference between two adjacent along the walk way will not exceed 0.25".



TRIP - STANDARDS

Occupational Safety
& Health
Administration
(OSHA) 1918

Occupational Safety
& Health
Administration
(OSHA) 1915

American with
Disabilities
Accessibility
Guidelines (ADAAG)
15.2

ASTM

National Fire
Protection
Association (NFPA)
415/417

State and Local
Building Codes

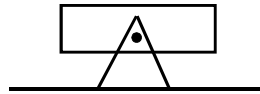
IMBALANCE

IMBALANCE - DEFINITION

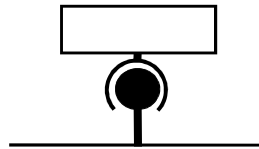
Stepping on unstable surface along a walking path e.g. a loose tile



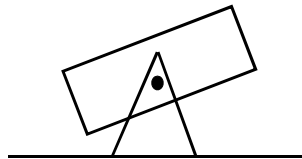
IMBALANCE - MODELING



Loose tile can be modeled as a tile attached to ground by a pivot or a ball joint depends on its motion



IMBALANCE - MODELING



As the tile tilts, the magnitude of the supporting friction force is reduced just the same as in a ramp. In this case the apparent COF changes with the tile's angle. Also, the demand on the ankle might exceeds its capabilities.

ENGINEERING PRINCIPLES



Reduction of Injuries and a Proactive Approach

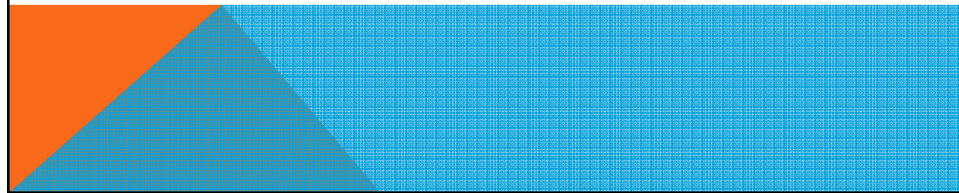
BEST PRACTICE

- ✓ Comply with accessibility standards in the American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.
- ✓ US Access Board has standards which act as guidance for pedestrian facilities.

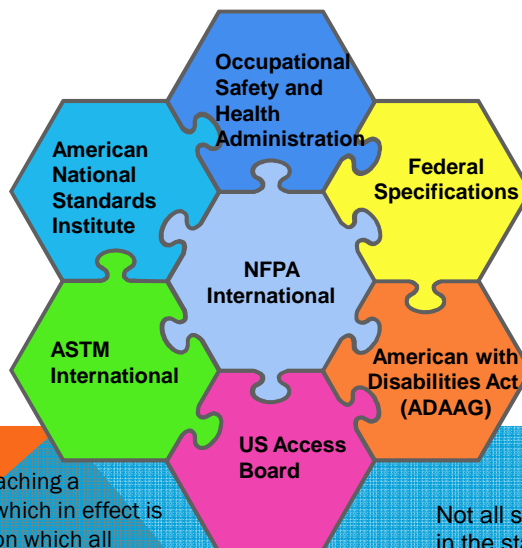


BEST PRACTICES

- The most important (fundamental) level of preventing an accident is removing any hazard.
- Most accident could have been easily preventable had management understood the dangers, identified the problem areas and quickly eliminated the hazard.



STANDARDS AND CODES



Other

- Professional Societies
- International Code Council
- Underwriters Laboratories
- Industry Associations

Based on reaching a consensus, which in effect is a minimum on which all participants can agree.

Not all situations are covered in the standard and code.

FALLING IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

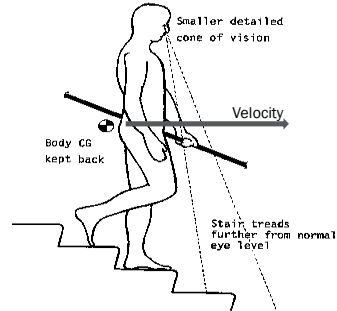


PATHWAYS



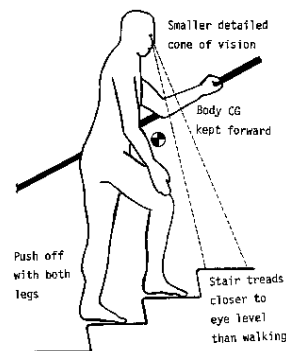
SLIP & TRIP ON STAIRS

Slip usually occurs during stepping down the stairs since the leading foot requires small horizontal support force



SLIP & TRIP ON STAIRS

Trip usually occurs where the stair riser is not uniform and the leading foot hitting the stair too low

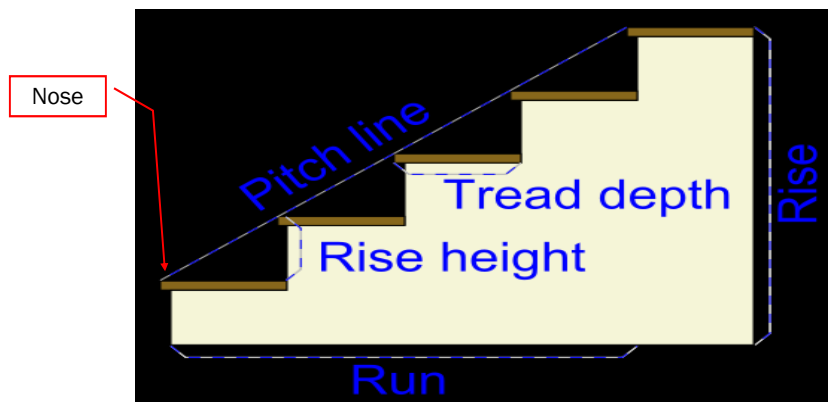


FALL ON STAIRS

- ✓ Poor illumination make it difficult to detect the stair's nose
- ✓ Rich pattern on carpeted stairs make it difficult to see the edge of the stair (same with wood)



STAIRS - DEFINITION



STAIRS - REQUIREMENTS

Riser	7" max. 4" min.
Tread	11" min.
Width	20" min.
Head room	80" min.
Riser deviation	0.375" max.
Tread deviation	0.375" max.
Leading edge	max. radius of 0.5"
Nose projection	1.25" max.
Tread slope	0.25" max.

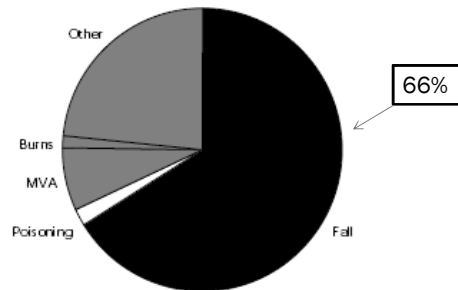
Dimensions can vary and depend on use

AGING AND FALLING

- Susceptibility to falling increases considerably with age
- One in three seniors will fall one or more times each year
- Injury is a potentially serious outcome of falling in older people
- Approximately half the falls occur within the persons home
- Impaired vision and hearing, peripheral sensation, muscle strength and reaction time all contribute to poor balance and falling

AGING AND FALLING

Type of injury, injuries among older people



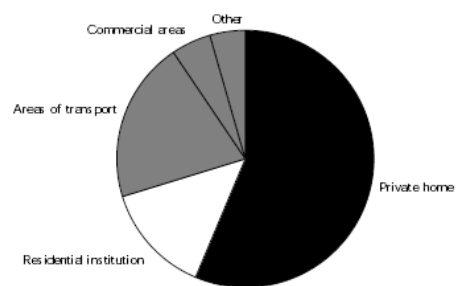
(≥65 yrs), VTSS: WH, LRH, RMH 2 yrs each, PANCH 1 yr

N = 5101

AGING AND FALLING

Location of injury, injuries among older people

: 2

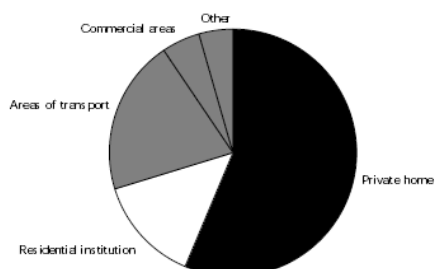


(≥65 yrs), VTSS: WH, LRH, RMH 2 yrs each, PANCH 1 yr

N = 4132, where location recorded

AGING AND FALLING

Location of injury, injuries among older people

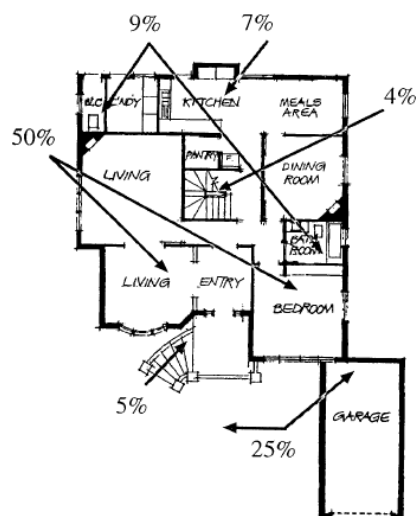


(≥65 yrs), VTSS: WH, LRH, RMH 2 yrs each, PANCH 1yr

N = 4132, where location recorded

AGING AND FALLING

Location of falls in private homes, injuries among older people

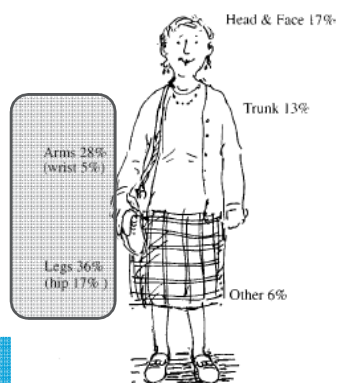


(≥65 yrs), VTSS: WH, LRH, RMH 2 yrs each, PANCH 1yr

N=1618

AGING AND FALLING

Body parts injured,
injuries among older people



(≥65 yrs), VISS: WH, LRH,
RMH 2 yrs each, PANCH 1yr.
Up to 3 injuries may be recorded per
case. N of injuries=6298

AGING AND FALLING

Factors associated with falls in private home
injuries among older people

Table 1

Factor	Cases N=1618*
stairs or steps	143
chairs	92
floors or flooring materials	85
beds	72
ladders	64
concrete and other man-made outdoor surfaces	43
ground and other natural surfaces	42
water	36
baths or showers	34
crutches, canes or walkers	29
runners, throw-rugs, door-mats	24
rugs or carpets	21

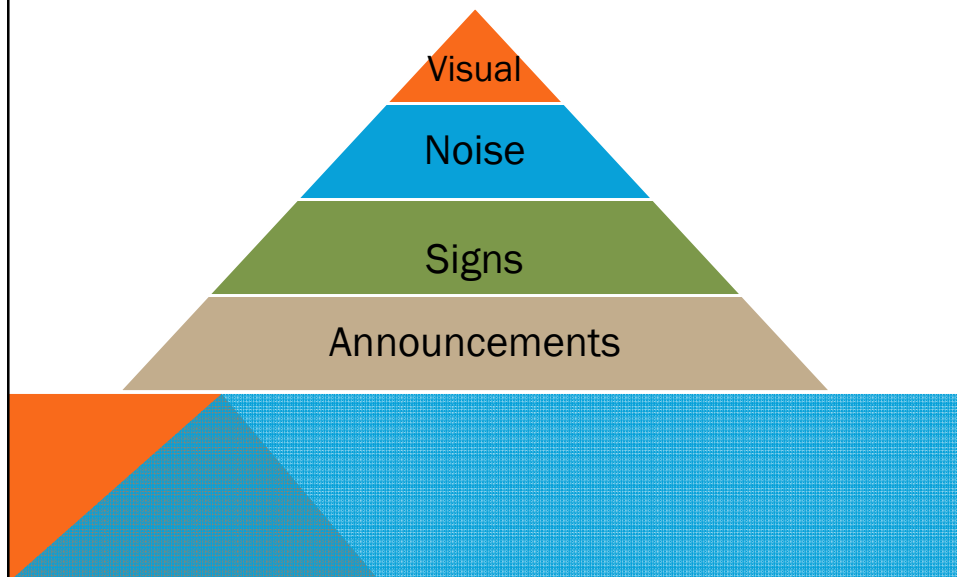
(≥65 yrs), VISS: WH, LRH, RMH 2 yrs each, PANCH 1yr

* Up to 4 factors may be recorded per case

ILLUMINATION AND FALLING

- Lighting can disguise a defect or hazardous condition
- A change in the normal walking environment must be visible to the pedestrian and stand out from background stimuli
- Glare and too much or too little contrast in the walking environment can reduce the efficiency of the eye
- Walking surface should be evenly illuminated and should have a brightness level of at least 20 foot candles
- Contrast (ratio of dark to light) should be no less than 3-1 and no more than 20-1
- Measurement of luminosity and contrast requires a simple photographic light meter calibrated to read in foot candles

DISTRACTION AND WARNING



FLOOR CONSIDERATIONS

Slipperiness of the floor material

Circumstances used

Full range of contaminants that might be experienced

Clean and maintenance protocols

Slip resistance of installed floor might be different from factory product

Effects of time on floor surface

Finish and Treatments properties

Impact of wear

WORKPLACE FALLS

Weather conditions

Walking surface

Foot floor interface

Footwear and equipment

Working practices

Job training

Management & organization factors

PARKING LOTS

Typical illumination problem is that lights are obstructed by overgrown trees

Stop blocks are not painted and cannot be detected because of poor lighting

Rain and water on the surface cause glare

Even shallow water hide potholes and other defects in the pavement

TERMINAL FACILITIES

Passenger Flow

Walking Surface

Parking & External Areas

Changes in Level

Stairways

Handrails

Ramps

Entrances and Exits

Floor Coverings

Escalators

Elevators

Moving Walkways

TRUCK LOADING DOCK

Dock levelers or
plates

Maintenance
and cleaning

Enclosed bays

Wheel chocks

BATHROOMS

USUALLY SLIPPERY
CONDITIONS DUE TO WET
FLOOR

COMING OUT OF A BATH TUB
REQUIRES SOME BALANCING
ACT WHICH DEMANDS HIGH
COEFFICIENT OF FRICTION

OLDER PEOPLE HAVE
DIFFICULTY TO GET OUT
OF A BATH TUB

MATS, WHICH ARE SUPPOSE
TO PROVIDE HIGH FRICTION,
MIGHT MAKE THE SITUATION
EVEN WORSE

ICE AND SNOW

VERY LOW
COEFFICIENT OF
FRICTION

SNOW MIGHT COVER
OBSTACLES

DRASTIC CHANGE IN
COEFFICIENT OF
FRICTION FOR THE
FIRST STEP OUT THE
OF COVERED AREA

ELEVATORS, ESCALATORS, MOVING WALKWAYS

CAR AND FLOOR LEVELS
SHOULD BE WITHIN
0.25 INCH

LARGE GAP BETWEEN
THE CAR AND THE
FLOOR CAN CAUSE HIGH
HEEL SHOE AND CAUSE
A FALL. SAME FOR
ESCALATOR

AVOID CHANGE IN
FLOOR SURFACE FROM
ONE FLOOR TO ANOTHER

SUITCASES AND BAGS
ON MOVING WALKWAYS
CAUSE TRIP

HIGH ACCELERATION OR
DECELERATION DURING
STEP ON/OFF FROM
MOVING WALKWAYS CAN
CAUSE A FALL

EMERGENCY STOP OF
ALL THESE DEVICES CAN
CAUSE A FALL

FALL ON SIDEWALKS

Smooth steel plate	Irregular surface	Uneven	Cracks	Potholes
Defective expansion joints	Lack of inspection	Tree roots	Leaking sprinkler	Debris
Sandy surface	Water collecting	Oil spills and grease	Missing utility covers	Corroded utility covers
	Broken parking signs	Metal stubs	Guywires anchored	

RECREATION AND PLAY GROUNDS

Foodstuff and liquid spills	Debris and litter
Insufficient lighting	Unprotected high places

FALL PREVENTION

Slip resistant floors	Avoid presence of fall risks	Cover outside walkways	Design to exclude tripping	Space for storage
Avoid low steps	Steps and stairs proper dimensions	Step edge with contrast	Avoid visual distractions	Permanent access to high areas
Avoid unpredictable moving surfaces	Install grab rails	Adequate lighting	Facilitate cleaning and maintenance	Design for durability
Design for resistance to damage				

RISK REDUCTION

Education and awareness	Perform risk assessment	Implement controls	Procedures for inspection	Cleaning & maintenance protocols
Warning signs	Mark hazards	Mark step edges	Additional handrails & grab rails	Barriers for edge protection
Increase use of lighting	Avoid awkward heavy loads	Avoid rushing	Protocols for inclement weather	Devices to assist those in need

RISK REDUCTION

Promote and
monitor health

Encourage
exercise

Promote good
diet

Adopt drug
protocols

Promote sleep
management

Discourage use
of alcohol

Encourage use
of footwear

Encourage use
of proper
clothing

Promote eye
exam and
glasses

PREMISE LIABILITY

Duty owed

Trespasser

Statutes

Notice

Proximate
cause

Damages

INFORMATION NEEDS FOR SAFETY

Provide information that can be rapidly assimilated using more than one sense.

Provide detectable warnings

Provide warning of any potential dangers.

Information from the environment to travel along pathways safely and efficiently.

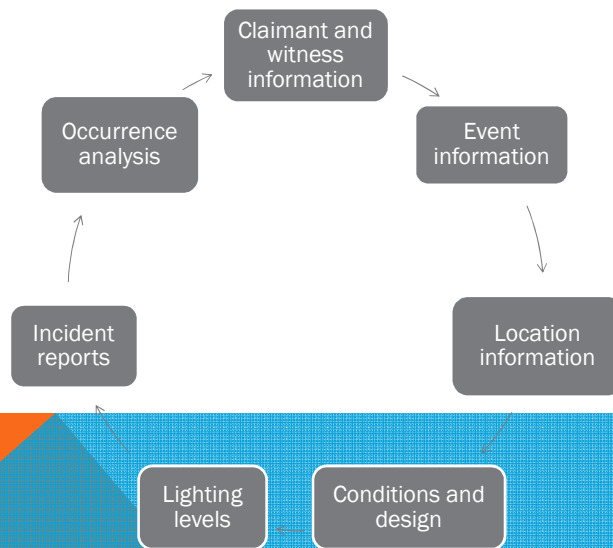
Obtained visually by observing cues at critical junctures as entrances and exits.

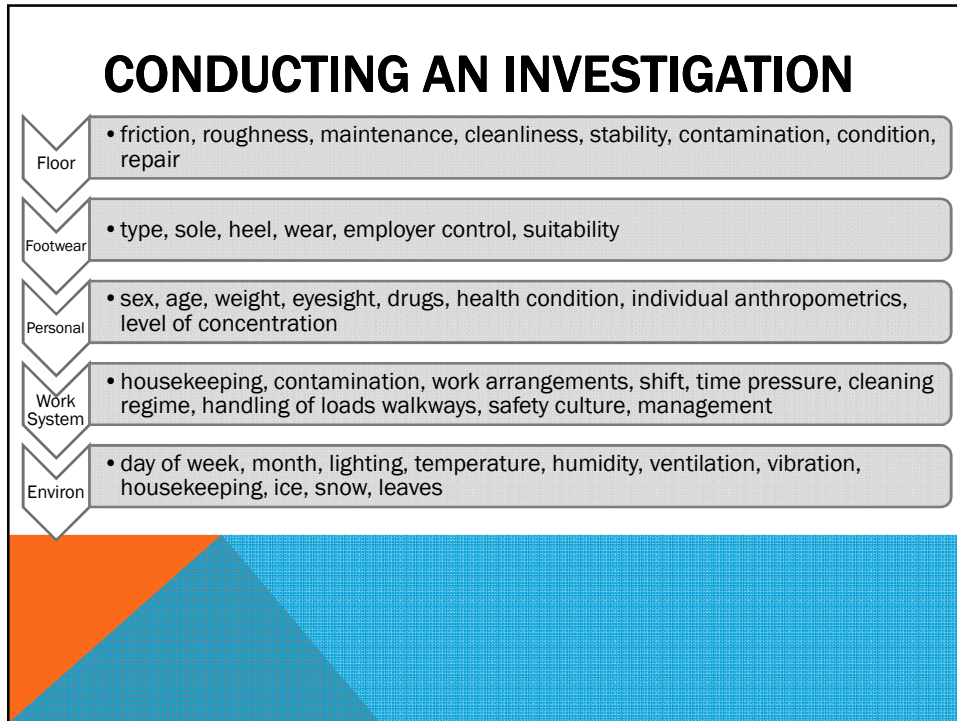
Visually impaired depend on cues to estimate distances and directions to determine location.

Information needs to be redundant and in the multiple format.

Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION





CONDUCTING AN INVESTIGATION

*TESTING and
EXPERIMENTS*

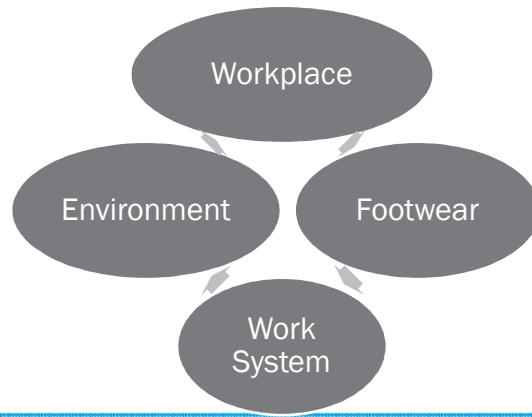
Performed ASAP in order to preserve the surface condition as it was at the time of the accident

GMC v. Carl PORRITT

“Where testing is offered as evidence, the conditions in an experiment must be substantially similar to those at the time of the occurrence for evidence of the experiment to be admitted”

“For purpose of determining admissibility of scientific testing, determination of the similarity of the circumstances & conditions of a scientific test to those existing at the time of the occurrence is left to the discretion of the trial court.”

STATUTORY CONTROLS



THEORY OF LIABILITY



DEFENDING

Determine facts

Analyze plaintiff
information

Evaluate prior
accidents

Review
maintenance
and inspection
procedures

Assemble facts

Evaluate
physical
evidence

Select expert

Motion for
summary
judgment

Limited
immunity

VISION AND FALLING

Vision and
conspicuity

Visual ability

WALKING AREA MAINTENANCE

Floor
cleaning

Carpet and
floor
maintenance

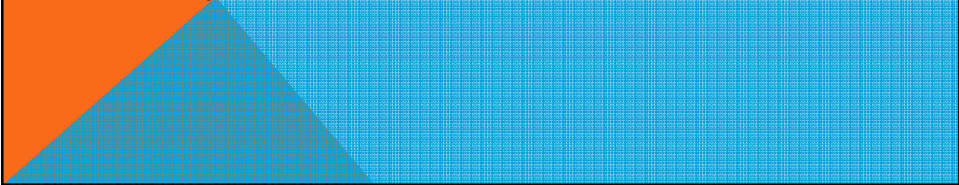
Floor
Treatments

Pavement
maintenance

USEFUL EVIDENCE TO BUILD OR DEFEND CASE

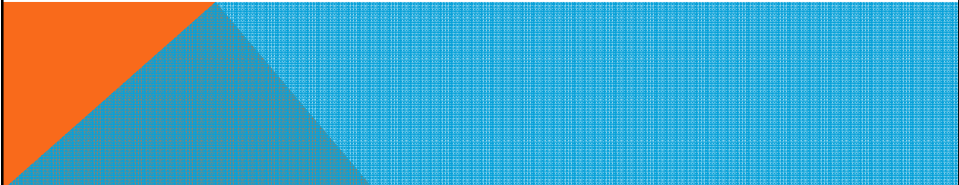
- ✓ Review Accident Facts
- ✓ Evaluate Prior Accidents
- ✓ Review Maintenance and Inspection Procedures
- ✓ Assemble Facts (Complaint, Discovery)
- ✓ Evaluate Physical Evidence

SELECTING AN EXPERT

- ✓ Communications is the key to success in personal injury matters
 - ✓ Factual interpretation and accurate analysis of information can be obtained only through a qualified expert
 - ✓ Must be articulate and able to speak before a judge and jury
 - ✓ Must be able to interpret information for the jury in simple terms
- 

SELECTING AN EXPERT

What to look for:

- ✓ Education and Background
 - ✓ Employment History
 - ✓ Litigation Experience
 - ✓ Appearance and Mannerisms
 - ✓ Availability
- 

USING THE EXPERT

Retaining an expert early can assist in case preparation and evaluation

- ✓ To identify issues and possible flaws in the case
- ✓ To provide assistance in preparing a comprehensive list of discovery information
- ✓ To assist the attorney and jury in understand the technical aspects of the case and evaluating the facts as measured by the national standards of care

DUTY OF CARE

- ☐ Warn passengers of hazards
- ☐ Properly train personnel
- ☐ Have safety inspections
- ☐ Update design standards
- ☐ Provide effective communications



