

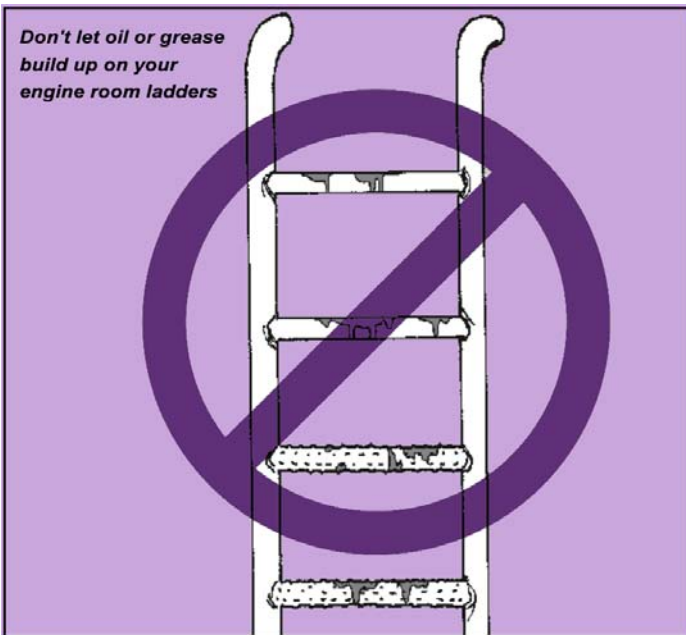
Simple Basics Can keep You Fishing, NOT Stuck Ashore



BY
**HARVEY
LINTON**
for WorkSafeBC

Working at sea, many of us have experienced slips, trips and falls, sometimes with injuries ranging from bruises to badly broken bones. No one on any fishing vessel is immune, but everyone can act to avoid potentially long-term pain.

A good place to start is your deck, where slips can result from poor traction caused by fish scales, slime, blood and guts, seaweed or jellyfish lying around. Compounding the problem are decks made of oiled wood or smooth untreated metal and footwear offering little traction for pushing, pulling or lifting loads.



Then so much more can trip you up: lines, fish totes, pen boards, hatch covers and shafts...to say nothing of variations in levels between fore decks, main decks or poop decks.

Finally, you have the possibility of falls into a hold or fish tank, off ladders, out of the rigging, off the top of the house, when jumping into a skiff or between the vessel and a float or deck.

I remember one case when a skipper returned to his vessel with a 40-ouncer in each hand and surprised himself by walking off the end of the dock and fell 20 feet into the water below. Fortunately, someone rescued him from this sobering experience.

That puts me in mind of other, work-related human factors contributing to slips, trips and falls:

- Being in a panic to get things done, and trying to do too much at once;
- lack of sleep and mild fatigue; and
- inattention, and not recognizing or acknowledging simple hazards.

Everyone has a responsibility here. The vessel owner must keep rigging, ladders, decks and equipment in good condition to minimize hazards. The skipper must see that everyone aboard knows and applies safe practices. Crewmembers must work safely, including using fall protection when up the rigging.

Here are just four ways those shared responsibilities translate into preventing slips, trips and falls.

1. Bring and wear footwear with suitable support and traction – on wet decks, in tanks or holds, in engine rooms and gear sheds and no ladders, ramps, floats and docks.
2. Practice good housekeeping and maintenance to remove slipping and tripping hazards.
3. On fixed or portable ladders, use both hands for yourself, not one for you and one for the ship! Hold on to the side rails; take one rung at a time, and don't carry anything in one hand that might throw you off balance.
4. Raise or lower tools and other essential items with a rope and bucket or container.
5. Use lighting for night work and in areas such as tanks, holds or lazarettes where visibility is poor. This is essential because, all too often, what you can't see will definitely hurt you.

I know all this may sound too simple or basic for the working fisherman. But, it can keep you working where you belong, instead of stuck ashore because of injuries from slips, trips or falls.

Email comments to Ellen.Hanson@worksafebc.com, or phone her at 604-233-4008 in the Lower Mainland and toll-free elsewhere in BC to 1-888-621-7233.



WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE