

Propane Safety Meeting

Subject: Dismounting Safely From Trucks and Power Equipment

Sprained ankles, broken ankles, blown-out knees, broken hips, broken ribs, concussions, broken arms, brain damage, broken backs and related injuries! Are these the results of some new extreme sport or daredevil activity? Not really. They are the result of drivers dismounting from their truck cabs, platforms and loading docks improperly. These are devastating injuries to the individual worker that result in off-the-job lost time and major disruptions to their families and to their company's team of employees. In addition, these types of injuries often require long painful periods of rehabilitation and physical therapy to get the worker back to full time work and even at that they may never again be "as good as new".

Let's look at some basic rules to follow that will help eliminate the potential hazard of getting in our out of a truck cab, truck bed or platform.

- ❖ **Never jump for any reason.** It has been calculated that jumping from a four foot level, impact forces to the bones and connective tissues of the legs and feet can reach over 2,000 lbs. This is more than enough stress to cause broken bones, torn connective tissue such as tendons and ligaments and major misalignment to the skeletal structures in the ankles, knees, legs and back even if a fall has not occurred to compound the matter. Making a habit of jumping down can also have an accumulative effect not noticed at the time but setting the individual up for a bone joint or tendon failure. Damage is occurring.
- ❖ **Be aware of the surface you are stepping on.** Changing weather conditions can create icy or wet surfaces that escalate the danger of just stepping on them. Look for such conditions along with uneven surfaces, loose gravel, rocks or objects that may be directly in your step-down path. Be observant.
- ❖ **Fight complacency.** Getting in and out of a truck or off of a platform may be a motion that is repeated dozens of times each day depending on the nature of the work. That's why developing good habits of motion and mentally installing them as habits of process can make safety a habit as well.
- ❖ **Follow the three point dismount rule.** When dismounting from a cab or platform ladder always turn and face the cab or ladder. Keep three of your limbs in continual contact with the ladder or steps, that is, two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand. Place your feet squarely on the rungs as this helps avoid turning an ankle, slipping, falling or hitting objects around you. Again, look where you are stepping.
- ❖ **Take time to clean the steps or rungs.** Winter time conditions can put a thick layer of ice or snow right where you are stepping. A small tool such as a metal scrapper or flat bar are handy for such use. Remember that mud can be just as slippery and hazardous as ice and snow. Clean the bottom of your boots as well. In addition to being dangerous in climbing in and out of the cab, it also makes the use of the truck pedals difficult and uncertain.

How serious is the problem? Industry wide, a quarter to a third of all injuries are from drivers or machine operators getting into or off of trucks or other equipment. Remind yourself and remind each other.

Questions for thought and discussion:

1. Has anyone in the company or anyone we know been involved in such an injury?
2. What was the cause and what was the outcome?
3. Do we keep our cabs clean and free of trash build up or do we look like a garbage pickup service?



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