

KANSAS HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

An organization of hospitals working together to improve access, quality and the affordability of health care for all Kansans.



KHA Workers Compensation Fund, Inc. Accident Facts Bulletin #1 February, 2009

DESCRIPTION:

A department director was on her way to retrieve some files in a storage area and had enlisted the help of a materials management person to help her. The storage area is in the rear portion of a large building that had recently been acquired. Some temporary walls had been constructed to form a secure area in which to keep the files. When going through the door to the storage room the director tripped over a raised metal door frame bracket that connected and supported the walls on either side of the door. Her fall to the cement floor resulted in hurt knees, a jarred body and severe back pain. She received two epidural steroid injections for her back, went through physical therapy and missed a total of two days of work.

INVESTIGATION FINDINGS:

- The accident occurred at 2:00 in the afternoon; weather conditions were not a factor.
- The injured lady is 61 years old and has worked at the hospital for years.
- This was an area not familiar to the director, but which was very familiar to the materials management person.
- Lighting in the area is poor, and had not been upgraded in the several months that this area had been occupied. Some lighting is available in parts of this area, but switches are not handy / easy to get to when entering the area.
- Persons who frequented the area were aware of the raised bracket in the doorway, and some had reportedly stumbled on it before this incident.
- The injured lady had a history of prior back problems.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES IDENTIFIED / LESSONS LEARNED:

- This accident, like most accidents, was the result of a combination of issues. The raised bracket, poor lighting, and unfamiliarity with the area were all factors. Her prior history of back problems may have also made her more susceptible to the seriousness of her injury.
- The door bracket was replaced within an hour of the accident with a floor level threshold.
- A light triggered by a motion sensor was installed in the area and, while it does not brighten the entire area, it does improve the lighting situation significantly.
- Near misses usually precede most accidents, and being aware of this is important so that they can be recognized as "an early warning."
- If we wait for an injury accident to implement preventive or corrective measures then there will be injury accidents. Why wait when near miss situations that serve as a warning almost always occur prior to the serious accident?

KHA Accident Facts Bulletins are descriptions of accidents that have occurred to members of the KHA workers' compensation program. Call Chuck Pirie, KHA Safety Consultant from Safety InSight LLC, at (913) 764-6436 if you have had an accident that other members may be able to learn from to improve their safety efforts.