

# Be Aware of Your Surroundings – Safety Talk



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**CHICAGO**

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**There have been a string of injuries, over the past two months, in Facilities Services associated with employees working in unfamiliar locations.**

**Paying attention to your surroundings might prevent an injury.**

**Accidents can occur when working in unfamiliar areas because employees unfamiliar of the hazards in the area:**

### Survey your work area before you do anything

- Ensure that you have enough space to do your work.
- Meet with the building engineer to discuss your work.
- Identify if lockout/tagout needs to be performed energy sources.
- Check the condition of the flooring and lighting.
- In mechanical spaces and tunnels, look for: low overhead hazards, sharp edges or surfaces, standing water, non-insulated pipes, exposed wiring, and unguarded equipment.

### Walk to the route you will be following when transporting materials

- Look for uneven surfaces, trip hazards, objects you need to maneuver around, foot traffic, or any other obstacle.
- Pay attention before entering elevators: the floor of the elevator may not be even with the floor of the corridor.
- Check the stairways: condition of the steps and landings, uneven stair heights, and obstacles an uneven surfaces around both sides of the door to stairway.

### Do not create new hazards

- Avoid running extension cords through high foot traffic areas.
- Do not block emergency exits or routes of egress.
- Clean up when you are done: remove all of your tools, clean up debris, replace machine guards and electrical covers (junction boxes, outlets, switches), etc.
- Consider the building occupants when scheduling your work: sometimes waiting until there are less people around is better.
- Put up barriers and signage to warn building occupants to avoid hazards and stay clear of your work area.
- Report hazards you observe to the Facilities Services Work Center – just because it's not your building doesn't mean you should ignore the hazard!

**Also be aware:  
"Familiarity breeds contempt..."**

1. There is a tendency to overlook hazards in familiar work settings.
2. Regularly inspect your normal work area.
3. Follow a regular housekeeping schedule.
4. Ensure warning signage is posted where needed.
5. Take ownership of your workspace, and coach your coworkers to do so as well.
6. Take the initiative and report issues to the Work Center.
7. Continuously identify opportunities to improve safety in your work space; don't fall into the mindset of "It's always been like that."

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Report safety issues to the Work Center:

*Call:*  
**773-834-1414**

*Email:*  
**[work-center@uchicago.edu](mailto:work-center@uchicago.edu)**