

## Media Release

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## IWIF urges Maryland seniors to prevent falls at work during Fall Prevention Awareness Week

(TOWSON, Md.) — IWIF Workers' Compensation Insurance is joining forces with Partnership for a Safer Maryland to help raise awareness among working seniors about the risks associated with falls at home and at work. The week of September 18-24, 2011 is designated as Fall Prevention Awareness Week in Maryland.

According to IWIF, falls are among the most serious and common accidents that threaten independence and quality of life for working adults ages 65 and older. Falls are also costly for employers of seniors. In 2009, 1.2% percent of IWIF's reported claims were filed from workers aged 65 and older due to falls. That equates to \$1.4 million dollars in paid claims. Falls involving seniors can also occur at home and be very costly. In 2009, falls among Maryland seniors resulted in more than \$225 million in hospital out-patient visits and admission charges. Of the 581 fall-related deaths reported in Maryland in 2009, 453 (78%) were adults 65 and over, according to Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Major risk factors for falls involving older adults include lack of exercise, reduced visual acuity and depth perception, medication side effects, work/home/environmental hazards. To avoid falls, employers and their senior-aged employees can do the following:

- Wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the job.
- Keep all platforms and floorings clear of tools, equipment and debris.
- Don't ride a platform that is being moved by someone else.
- Don't jump to the ground.
- -Keep all guardrails in place.
- -Improve lighting in the workplace.
- -Install handrails and lights in all stairwells.
- Ensure treads on steps are in good condition and edges of steps are clearly marked.
- -Walk; don't run.
- -Concentrate on where you're going.
- -Wear the right shoes for the job and ones that are in good condition.

- Keep shoelaces tied.
- -Clear walkways and stairs of fall hazards.

Additional precautions seniors can take to reduce the risk of falls include scheduling regular vision check-ups, having a doctor or pharmacist review their medications periodically, and beginning a regular exercise program to increase balance and coordination.

Older workers bring a lifetime of skills and experience to their jobs, making valuable contributions into their 60s, and 70s. But the normal aging process could affect an older worker's ability to safely perform a job. Employers should be aware of the natural aging process and how this could affect the safety and health of their older employees. One place to start is fall prevention to help their older employees stay safe on the job.

For more information on how seniors can prevent falls at work, contact Joe Gillian, IWIF Risk Management Officer, at 410-494-2014, or visit IWIF's Safety University at www.iwif.com and click on Safety Tip Sheets, Older Worker Safety.

For more information about Fall Prevention Week and the Partnership for a Safer Maryland, call DHMH Office of Injury Prevention and Health Promotion at 410-767-6779.

Established in 1914, IWIF is the leading writer of workers' compensation insurance in Maryland. IWIF is a self-supporting insurance company that operates solely from premium and investment income.

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