

Safety Tip of the Month – December 2007
VSI Safety Committee
“Injuries From Falls: More Than You Think”

The combination of wet pool decks and bare feet all too often result in slipping and falling, sometimes causing serious injuries. Records indicate that approximately 30% of USA Swimming reported injuries are caused by people falling on pool decks, locker rooms, restrooms, stairs, bleachers and halls.

Prevention. The five-point strategy stated below is presented to prevent falls and their debilitating injuries:

1. Keep decks and other floors as dry as possible; make water removal a maintenance and safety priority. Have someone responsible for inspecting areas to turn off unused showers, to check possible overflow of drinking fountains, etc.
2. Simply be alert to wet surfaces and recognize the risks. Attractive signs can be used to remind people of areas of potential danger. Enforce pool rules prohibiting running.
3. When practical, use footwear. Sandals with straps attached to both foot and ankle are most helpful. Use of athletic shoes complete with socks not only protects against falls, but keeps the feet warm as well. This is an important health and comfort consideration.
4. Use of non-skid floor and deck materials will make your pool more attractive and safe. Special care should be given to areas where foot traffic turns or changes direction.
5. Facility managers should analyze each accident and develop a plan to ameliorate the conditions which caused it.

What to do if someone falls. Have the victim remain on the floor until examined by a safety trained person such as a coach. Special care must be given if a head, neck or back injury is suspected. If a person has fallen, someone should stay with the person and discourage that person from trying to get up. It is also recommended that the fall victim remain on their back, and keep their head as still as possible, in case there is a spinal cord injury. In these cases, emergency medical personnel should immediately be called (911 in most areas) and the prescribed protocol for transportation of the person should be followed. Occasionally, loss of consciousness accompanies a head injury. Should this occur, one must monitor the victim while awaiting emergency medical help. Be prepared to perform CPR if necessary.

As always, prevention of accidents is the key to safe, enjoyable swimming.