



A series of bulletins intended to keep members informed and safe

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**Subject:** Safety From The Bottom Up

Feet can get hurt on the job. They can get punctured, crushed, sprained and lacerated. A lack of attention to foot safety can cause slips, trips and falls, which account for 15% of reported disability workplace injuries in Canada.

Feet don't just get hurt while in motion – they also can be injured when standing in one place for too long. Continuous standing not only tires the feet but can cause the joints of foot bones to become misaligned. It can even cause inflammation that might later lead to rheumatism and arthritis.

To make matters worse, people often wear shoes or boots that no foot could happily endure. Wearing the wrong footwear can cause blisters, calluses, corns, arthritis, toe malformations, fallen arches, bunions and other problems.

A worker with sore feet is often less alert and more susceptible to various injuries at work. The first step to reducing foot problems in the workplace is to identify relevant hazards.

#### **How the job is designed**

Tasks should incorporate varying body positions that use different muscles. Job rotation, job expansion and teamwork, as well as frequent short rest breaks, can reduce the toll on your feet.

#### **How the workplace is designed**

A workstation should allow the worker room to change body position. A foot-rail or footrest allows the worker to shift from one leg to the other and reduces stress on the lower legs.

#### **What we stand on**

An unyielding floor, such as concrete, has the impact of a hammer on the feet when stepped on. Any other type of floor is preferable – wood, cork, carpeting or rubber. As a last resort, anti-fatigue matting provides cushioning that reduces foot fatigue, but should be used with caution.

#### **Fashion can be painful**

Pointy-toed, high heels at work are a bad idea anytime, but not all footwear problems are so obvious. When choosing footwear, look for the following qualities:

- The inner side of the shoe must be straight from the heel to the end of the big toe. The shoe must grip the heel firmly.
- The forepart must be roomy enough for the toes to move freely.
- The shoe must have a fastening across the instep to prevent the foot from slipping when walking.
- The shoe must have a low, wide-based heel; flat shoes are recommended.
- The shoe must fit. Don't count on it stretching.
- Shock-absorbing insoles can help cushion the foot from impact.

For workers exposed to foot hazards, many Canadian occupational health and safety laws require protective footwear certified by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

***TWU National Health & Safety Committee***