

Know Your Legal Rights

*“Know Your Legal Rights”
is a free legal education series
by Dixon Law Office.*

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4 Questions You Must Ask If You Fall

When you fall down, it is always sudden, unexpected, and embarrassing. But many falls are the result of someone else doing something wrong. A box left out, a downspout draining on a sidewalk, a raised floor tile, or slippery floor are all examples of hazards you might not see and cause you to fall. Often, some of the most serious, catastrophic and life altering injuries occur in a slip, trip and fall accident.

If you or a loved one falls, there are four questions you should ask immediately. These will help protect you, document what happened, and if your fall was the fault of someone else, help you prove they did wrong.

1. What Caused Me to Fall?

No one ever expects to fall so when it happens you are caught off guard. You first need to know what caused you to fall. Look around. If it was an obstruction like a box, package, or product, pay attention to the type, size and color. If it was something covering the floor like a liquid, try and figure out what it was. Is it water, juice, ice, oil? Notice the color and size of the spill.

If at all possible, try and document what happened. Take photos or video of the scene, the spill or object, and the people around. This will help prove what happened. If you do have a claim, this will help the insurance adjuster see that this is real and prove this is not a faked claim.

2. Who Saw Me Fall?

Witnesses to your fall are always important. If someone saw you fall or even saw you after, get their names and phone numbers. While what you say is important, having others who saw it will help prove your case and make the claim even stronger. If possible, find out what they saw and ask them to report it.

3. Who Should I Report My Fall To?

If you fall at a store or other public place, you should immediately report the incident to someone in charge. At Wal-Mart or another large retail store, that might be the greeter or a cashier. At a grocery store it might be the stock clerk. At a stadium, that might be a security person. However, you try and report the incident right away.

Reporting your fall does two things. First, reporting the fall helps protect other people. Once they know (or are told again), they can fix it and prevent others from falling and getting hurt. Second, it documents what happened. Like it or not, some people will claim you did not really fall or that nothing caused you to fall. Reporting it helps prove what happened.

4. Am I Hurt?

It is smart to not only assess the scene and the situation, but also yourself. Are you hurt? Take a moment and check yourself out. Immediately after a fall, your adrenaline is pumping and you likely won't notice injuries. Look for blood, bruises, and twisted body parts. If you have injuries, you need to know and get medical attention right away.

Asking these four questions after a slip, trip, or fall accident can be very important. It helps document what happen, provides all the available information to those in charge and hopefully keeps others safe as well.

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