



Get a Handle on Slips, Trips, & Falls in the Workplace

Slips, trips, and falls occur frequently across many areas of the workplace and are often preventable. Workplace injuries suffered from this cause-of-loss source have always been a loss leader for workers' compensation claims, but incorporating some simple measures can reduce the frequency of these injuries.

One can prevent injuries by:

- Practicing situational awareness,
- Using caution,
- Being alert and thoughtful,
- Improving footwear, and
- Maintaining good housekeeping.

Employees should observe the work environment and clean up floor-level obstructions near walkways daily, remove snow and ice from parking lots and sidewalks in the winter, clear wet leaves in the spring and fall, and repair broken pavement in the summer. Remove hoses, cords, boxes, and debris around walking areas and close drawers on cabinets so they cannot be tripped over. Store equipment in safe locations and never leave them strewn about to be in the way unexpectedly.

Most slips, trips, and falls result from unsure footing and they can occur on any surface covered in a slippery substance including mud, snow, ice, water, oil, or grease. Ensure that spilled liquids are cleaned up immediately and the area is appropriately marked while waiting to have the spill cleaned up. Remind employees to report unsafe walking areas and ensure that leaks from water fountains, roofs, and similar situations are reported for correction as soon as possible. Grease and oils in garage settings can have absorbent sand, which must also be cleaned up.

Uneven or defective surfaces, floors littered with trash or other items, electrical cords and computer wires, open drawers, or anything else that protrudes onto the walking surface may cause a fall. Stairways present another tripping problem, being poorly illuminated. Treads can be worn or broken, handrails might be missing or loose, and outdoor stairs can be covered with ice, snow, or rain, making them very slick. Cartons, boxes, materials, or other items should not be stored on stairs. Proper lighting, without glare, shadows, or violent contrasts between floor areas is very important. Darkened areas can cause people to trip over objects they may not know exist or fall over uneven surface areas or door thresholds.



The condition and type of a person's shoes can also cause a fall. Shoes with smooth or worn soles or laces that are too long can contribute to a trip and fall. All workers should be encouraged to wear shoes that have a nonslip or grip-type sole. Work boots should be replaced when the soles no longer provide grip and slip easily on walking surfaces. Footwear is a necessary PPE (personal protective equipment) for a variety of job functions.

Most causes of slip, trip, and fall injuries are easily preventable. Emphasize situational awareness for all, from office staff to highway and DPW to parks and recreation. All have exposure to these types of injuries, and everyone can positively contribute to reducing their frequency in the workplace. Share this safety tip this month, National Safety Month, with your staff and reduce the hazards that contribute to this leading cause of workplace injuries.

