

# Slips, Trips, & Falls Prevention

Work-related slip, trip, and fall incidents occur in all places of employment and are caused by several factors. Contrary to popular belief, most work-related fall incidents occur from same-level surfaces. Slips, trips, and falls can cause serious injuries that impact an employee's ability to do his/her job, resulting in lost workdays, reduced productivity, and workers' compensation claims.

## Causes:

There are several causes for slip, trip, and fall incidents. They include:

### Poor drainage:

Improperly aligned drains and rain gutters can discharge water onto walking surfaces, causing them to become slippery. Clogged drains can cause water to backup onto floors and walkways.

### Walking surface irregularities:

Damaged, warped, buckled, or uneven floor surfaces can cause employees to stumble, trip, slip, or fall.

### Weather conditions:

Slippery conditions can be caused by ice, snow and rain, especially when entering a building with wet shoes.

### Inadequate lighting:

Inadequate lighting makes the ability to see and avoid hazards more difficult.

### Stairs and handrails:

Stairs that are poorly marked or uneven, as well as handrails that are not of the appropriate size, height, or are poorly maintained, can lead to missteps and cause employees to trip and fall.

### Clutter, loose cords, mats and rugs:

Clutter can build up in work areas, hallways, and walkways, and lead to slip, trip, and fall incidents. Exposed cords on the floor, stretched across walkways, and tangled near work spaces can catch an employee's foot and lead to a trip and fall incident.

### Distractions:

Carrying/reading items can result in poor awareness of the environment. Use of cell phones and/or texting can also result in poor situational awareness.

### Inappropriate footwear:

Footwear should be appropriate for the work being performed and the environmental conditions that may be present.

## Prevention:

The best method of dealing with slip, trip, and fall injuries is to prevent them from occurring in the first place. Simple measures can identify problem situations for correction before a slip, trip, or fall incident occurs. These strategies include:

### Developing a written housekeeping program:

A written housekeeping program can help ensure the quality and consistency of housekeeping procedures. The program should include a regular inspection procedure of slippery prone areas.

### Keep floors clean and dry:

Encourage employees to cover, clean, or report spills promptly. Also, slip resistant mats and coatings should be used in areas prone to getting wet often.

### Use proper cleaning procedures for floors:

Use a two-step mopping process to minimize slippery floors. In the two-step process, a cleaning solution is applied to the floor with a mop, followed by a second pass with clean water to remove any cleaning solution that may remain.

### Wear slip-resistant shoes:

Footwear should be chosen based on the type of conditions present in the work area.

### Communication and signage:

Prevent entry into areas that are wet through the use of highly-visible caution signs; establish reporting procedures.

## Moving forward:

Preventing slips, trips, and falls is everyone's responsibility.

Employees should be empowered to take immediate actions within their control to communicate and, when appropriate, correct hazards they observe. Each slip, trip, and fall incident, though unfortunate, should be used as a learning opportunity. Identify both what went wrong and corrective measures, and implement them at both a facility and departmentwide (enterprise) level.

