

**Information Bulletin**



**Slip, Trip, and Fall Hazards**

Thousands of workers are injured on the job every year from a slip, trip or fall. In 2011, slips, trips and falls were the second most common event or exposure leading to a work injury or illness (behind overexertion/bodily reaction), accounting for an incidence rate of 29.7 injuries per 10,000 full-time workers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

These injuries carry a steep cost. Combined, falls on the same level and falls to a lower level were the No. 1 cause of all disabling injury costs in 2010, representing one-quarter of the total and costing employers nearly \$14 billion, according to Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety.

**Frequency**

The high frequency of just the simple task of walking increases the exposure to risks. Adding to the problem is that because people walk so much, they may not necessarily be thinking about the task of walking; As a result, people can become distracted – similar to how they can while driving – and stop paying attention to hazards.

**Blame vs. Control**

Employers may not recognize slips, trips and falls as being a risk to workers, even though those same employers are likely very careful to prevent their customers/clients from being exposed to such hazards. Some employers may have a tendency to blame the worker for falling – because he or she is not paying attention, or just clumsy. Although it is acknowledged that employee inattention plays a role in the occurrence of slips, trips and falls, it is only one aspect. Physiological characteristics of the walker, such as his or her age or physical disabilities, can lead to slips, trips and falls, and an employer cannot control these factors.

On the other hand, many of the causes are factors that can be controlled, such as unclean floors, appropriate floor care products and employee training. In order to reduce the number of slips, trips and falls in the workplace, employers must focus on instituting a comprehensive approach that addresses those factors that employers can manipulate and otherwise control.

**Surfaces**

Employers can take several steps to mitigate the risks of slips, trips and falls. Flooring surfaces are an important factor and can often be overlooked. Select a walkway surface material that will perform well under expected conditions. For instance, certain surfaces are very slip-resistant when dry or clean but can lose some of those properties when wet.



<b>Meadowbrook Loss Control</b>	<b>Important Phone Numbers</b> 334-954-7200 or 1-800-536-7702	<b>January 2014</b>
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Poorly lit environments also contribute to slips, trips and falls. Employers should conduct a lighting evaluation to determine if surfaces can adequately be seen indoors, outdoors and at night. A combination of mats may be needed on slippery surfaces, such as one to remove debris and another to remove moisture. Although mats can be an effective tool in slip, trip and fall prevention programs, they must be used properly. Employers should ask their employees for input as to what types of mats are needed, where the mats are needed and how long the travel distance is. Additionally, employers should ensure a good maintenance program is in place for the mats, which can become saturated with water, develop worn edges, or even roll up and contribute to employees tripping or falling.

### Cleaning

A good self-inspection program to maintain floor condition is necessary, including one ensuring walkways are free from objects that could cause a slip, trip or fall. But an effective floor- and housecleaning program is important as well. Failing to follow instructions for cleaning chemicals is a common mistake. When a spill occurs, workers generally do a good job of placing warning signs around floors that are wet and being cleaned. The problem is that some people may leave those warning signs up long after the floor is dry, leading other employees to begin ignoring the signs. Well-maintained floors and a good cleaning program can help reduce slip, trip and fall hazards.



SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS  
PREVENTION TIP

### WORK AREAS

- Wear appropriate slip-resistant shoes.
- Walk slowly around corners, turns and other areas where visibility is limited.
- Keep workspaces and walkways clear and well-lit.

Source: SAIF Corp.




SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS  
PREVENTION TIP

### WET FLOORS

- Immediately clean up spills.
- Warn others of wet surfaces.
- Use caution while walking in areas where wet floors are likely, such as entrances or restrooms.

Source: SAIF Corp.



SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS  
PREVENTION TIP

### CORDS

- Do not extend electrical cords across a walking path.
- Tie up loose cords.
- Tape down or otherwise secure cords that are temporarily located in high-traffic areas.

Source: SAIF Corp.

### Appropriate footwear

Employee footwear is another often-overlooked factor in preventing slips, trips and falls. Employers should educate their employees on how to recognize when their shoes are unsafe. Many injuries are caused by wearing inappropriate footwear during adverse weather conditions. The data indicates that slips, trips and falls are directly responsible for many winter related injuries. We can prevent a majority of these injuries by simply placing an emphasis on traction. Rubber or slip-resistant composite soles with low heels increase stability. Correct footwear is the key!



SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS  
PREVENTION TIP

### STAIRS

- Take one step at a time.
- Keep one hand on the handrail.
- Limit your carrying load.
- Keep your vision unobstructed.

Source: SAIF Corp.

### Stairs

Stairwells are another area with serious risks for slips, trips and falls. Train employees and hang posters that demonstrate how to hold the handrail properly. Discourage running up or down the stairs. Provide adequate lighting in stairwells, and ensure steps have a good grip and are maintained.

### Employee involvement

Employers can make several small changes to minimize slip, trip and fall hazards. Simple solutions can come from having discussions with employees about hazards in the workplace and what can be done to prevent them. Employee involvement is vital to slip, trip and fall prevention.

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