August Safety Subject

Slips, Trips & Falls

- Slips, trips & falls cause 15% of all accidental deaths, second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities
- Be aware of your surroundings. Watch where you walk and step. Clean up all spills immediately.
- Don’t carry heavy or bulky loads that obstruct your view while walking
Preventing Slips & Falls

Slips and falls are one of the most common sources of injury in many workplaces, whether it’s an office environment or a shop floor. You may be creating an environment for a possible fall without even knowing it.

Have you ever:

• run down a flight of stairs?
• walked along a corridor while reading something?
• worked on a machine with a greasy spill nearby?

Everyone can probably answer “yes” to at least one of the above.

Avoiding a fall is up to you.

• Check your shoes. What kind are you wearing? Are the soles loose or worn? If so, replace them.

• Look for tripping hazards. If you see something in an aisleway such as litter or extension cords, move or report them. Also watch for loose or torn carpeting, mats or runners that can send you or someone else stumbling and falling.

• Obey signs such as “Caution: Wet Floor.” Be careful when you come indoors when it’s raining or snowing. Your shoes or boots will slide more easily when wet.

• Clean up spills immediately.

• Don’t carry heavy or bulky loads obstructing your view up or down stairs and ramps.

• Don’t store things on or near stairways. Someone could trip and fall to the bottom.

• Keep your head up while walking. Don’t run down a hallway and remember, no horseplay!

If you do fall:

• Keep your limbs parallel to the ground.

• Slap the ground with a hand and extended fingers to absorb part of the impact.

• Bend your arms toward the body.

• Try to roll onto your thighs or buttocks to prevent bone injuries.

• Don’t move if you think you’ve hurt yourself. Wait for help.

Your employer is committed to preventing slips and falls on the job but it takes teamwork. Everyone must work together to make your workplace as safe and accident-free as possible. Develop the skills to recognize, avoid and control potential slipping and falling hazards to prevent injuries both on and off the job.

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Preventing Slips, Trips & Falls
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Slip, trip and fall accidents are among the most common types of accidents resulting in workers' compensation injuries and general liability lawsuits. They can cause very serious injuries such as severe head injuries, back injuries, paralysis, broken bones, strained or sprained muscles and joints, lacerations, and even death. Most injuries occur from falls on the same level or on stairs, rather than falls from one level to another.

Slips
A slip occurs when there is too little friction or traction between the footwear and the walking surface. Some common causes of slips are:
- Wet walking surfaces
- Oil or other slippery material on the floor
- Ice, snow, or mud
- Materials such as scraps of paper, cloth, etc. on the floor
- Unanchored rugs or mats
- Highly polished floors or smooth floor coatings
- Footwear with soles that are not appropriate for the walking surfaces

Trips
A trip occurs when a person's foot contacts an object or drops to a lower level unexpectedly and they are thrown off balance. Some of the more common causes of tripping are:
- Cords and hoses on the floor
- Uneven or damaged walking surfaces (floors, parking lots, sidewalks, etc.)
- Frayed, wrinkled, or torn carpeting
- Debris, materials, tools, etc. left in aisles and other walking areas
- Poor lighting
- View forward is obstructed by materials the person is carrying
- Changes in walking surface levels such as curbs, thresholds, stairs, ramps, etc.

How To Prevent Slips & Trips
Since slips and trips are caused by a wide variety of hazards, prevention requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses walking and working surfaces, maintenance, housekeeping and storage practices, work practices, footwear requirements, and employee education and awareness.

There is a general tendency to blame an employee or customer who slips or trips for "not being careful" or "not watching where they were going". While some slips and trip can be avoided if the person is aware of the hazard and is alert to the danger, the fact is that most slip and trip accidents could have been avoided by eliminating the hazard in the first place and not placing the employee or customer in the position of having to "be careful" or "watch where they are going".

This short article cannot possibly cover all of the steps you should take to reduce or eliminate the potential for slip and trip accidents, however, here are a few things you should do:

1) Conduct regular self-inspections of your facility (inside and out) to identify slip and trip hazards and eliminate them.

2) Investigate all slip and trip accidents, even those in which no injury occurs, and take steps to prevent recurrences.
3) Have a footwear policy for employees, which require them to wear shoes with soles that are appropriate for the walking surfaces they will encounter in your facility.

4) Educate employees to know which areas of the workplace present potential slip and fall hazards, the proper footwear to wear for the hazards, to slow down and adjust their stride to a pace suitable for the walking surface and conditions, what to do if they find a potential slip or trip hazard, and to be sure that items they are carrying don't obstruct their view of potential slip or trip hazards in their path.

5) Require employees to keep all work areas, aisles, stairways and other walking and working surfaces clean and free of liquids, scraps, materials, cords, hoses, and other slip and trip hazards.

6) Replace highly polished or smooth floor coatings with slip-resistant surfaces or coatings such as brushed concrete, epoxy or other coatings with rough aggregates added, carpeting, or other less slippery flooring. If a polished surface is necessary for aesthetic reasons, use anti-slip waxes or add mats or carpeting in high traffic walking areas and near entrances to prevent tracked in water or mud.

7) Provide handrails on all stairs, steps, ramps and other areas with changes in floor level.

8) Provide adequate lighting in all walking and working areas and stairways.

9) Make sure that there is a difference in color between floor or step levels, especially where there is only one step down, or put a contrasting color on the edge of the change in floor level so that people can see that there is a step or drop down. Adding a railing also alerts people that there is a step down. Signs can also be posted but are not as effective as visual cues.

10) Have a program in place for ice and snow removal and treatment so that the hazards are removed or treated BEFORE employees or customers arrive in the morning and to handle any precipitation or freezing that occurs during business hours.

Most slips and trips can be prevented if you know what to look for and take action to reduce the risk and eliminate the hazards before someone is injured.
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Slips, Trips, & Falls Quiz QUESTIONS

1. Slips, trips, & falls cause _____ percent of all accidental deaths. ____________________

2. A slip occurs when there is too little ______________ between footwear and the walking surface. ____________________

3. True or False. Stairwells and stair landings are excellent places to store seldom used files or items in boxes. ____________________

4. In winter months, what should be kept clear on all outdoor walking surfaces? ____________________
Slips, Trips, & Falls Quiz ANSWERS

1. 15

2. friction or traction

3. False

4. Ice and Snow