

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

Preventable slips, trips and falls are common occurrences in the workplace and a leading cause of injuries that become high-cost workers' compensation claims. Prevention relies on hazard awareness.

Physical hazards include:

- Snow, ice, slush or rain
- Spills such as powders, grease or granules
- Highly polished or freshly waxed floors
- Uneven stairs and soft, rocky or sloped surfaces
- Entryways and exits with thresholds
- Loose tiles or patchy floor coverings
- Slippery grass, leaves or pine needles
- Clutter, cords, open cabinets and drawers
- Dim lighting, glare, shadows or darkness
- Hidden objects on the ground

In some instances, certain behaviors are a contributing factor, such as not paying attention while walking and talking on the phone. Other risky behaviors include carrying objects that impair movement or block lines of sight; taking shortcuts or not obeying warning signs; and misuse of recommended personal protective equipment. Conditions such as advanced age, poor vision, fatigue, dizziness or imbalance, certain disabilities or chronic diseases, and medications, alcohol and other substances that affect physical or cognitive function can also increase fall risk.

Prevention

It's important for everyone to be observant whether they work remotely, in a workplace or out in the field. When an indoor or outdoor slip, trip or fall hazard is apparent, employees should be empowered to take immediate corrective actions. This might include reconfiguring an office setup, strategic placement of warning signs and caution tape, or cleaning up spills.

If immediate action is not feasible, the hazard should be reported to designated workplace health and safety personnel. Consistent enforcement of procedures for handling toxic, wet or dry materials and ongoing equipment maintenance also help reduce injury risk.

Employees are advised to:

- Wear non-slip shoes or work boots
- Move at a reasonable, non-rushed pace



- Reduce digital device distractions
- Use handrails when they are available
- Carry a flashlight for dimly lit or dark areas
- Take precautions when a surface is uneven, wet or icy
- Carry small loads close to the body
- Not attempt to hand-carry large, bulky objects

When working at heights and under other potentially dangerous environmental conditions, employers must take steps to ensure that employees follow all guidelines for proper use of personal protective gear and fall arrest systems.

Good housekeeping practices include:

- Stowing or covering electrical cords, cables, hoses and other trip hazards
- Repairing damaged ladders or steps and uneven walking surfaces
- Ensuring floors are clean, dry and not slippery or sticky
- Closing drawers, cabinets and doors that block walkways and aisles
- Installing skid-resistant materials on ramps and other sloped surfaces
- Cleaning up spills after strategic placement of caution signs
- Using moisture-absorbent, slide-proof floor mats
- Installing adequate lighting to illuminate indoor and outdoor areas

In addition, personal fitness goes a long way toward reducing the likelihood of injury in the event of a slip, trip or fall. Activities that improve strength, balance, coordination and flexibility are recommended.

Recommended Resources

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

[Walking-Working Surfaces, Subpart D, 29 CFR 1910](#)

[Personal Protective Equipment for General Industry](#)

[Safety Standards for Fall Protection in the Construction Industry](#)

[Slips, Trips and Falls: Preventing Workplace Trip Hazards](#)

American National Standards Institute (ANSI)/American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) [Z359 Fall Protection and Fall Restraint standards](#)

Watch Your Step When Hiking: [WorkCare Fact Sheet](#)

