

Slips, Trips & Falls

In general, slips and trips result from a loss of traction between your footwear and the walking surface or by inadvertent contact with a stationary object. Conditions and situations that may contribute are:

- Poor housekeeping
- Wet or slick surfaces
- Obstacles in the walkway
- Lighting
- Footwear
- Behavior

Good housekeeping is key when it comes to preventing injury. In a workplace where housekeeping is poorly maintained there is typically increased employee injury, and an increasing insurance cost. In addition, a messy workplace may cause poor morale of the employees.

Statistics have shown that the highest number of occupational injury comes from slips, trips, and falls from the same level. It is certainly not uncommon for an employee to trip over an item that they have forgotten to put away. Good housekeeping can be achieved by creating a three step program:

- Plan the job – know what will be done, who will do it, and what the work area should look like when finished.
- Assign responsibilities – you may need to assign a specific person the job of cleaning (although it is preferable that an individual take responsibility for his/her own mess).
- Implement a program – make housekeeping part of the daily job requirements.

Wet or Slick Surfaces

Some types of walking/working surfaces cause slips and trips more often than others. Pay particular attention to your parking lots, sidewalks, and floors in general.

Traction of outdoor surfaces can change dramatically when subjected to rain, sleet, or snow. Indoor surfaces will change when moisture from these conditions are carried in with the workers. Control measures that can be taken are:

- Anti-skid adhesive tape
- Moisture absorbent mats. Be careful – improper mats can become trip hazards
- Have wet floor signs readily available and use them.
- Include in your company's policies and procedures what should be done when an employee discovers or creates a spill.
- In areas where it is expected that the floor will get wet, maintain adequate drainage, mats, and grating wherever possible.

Obstructions in Walkways

Slick or wet surfaces are not the only reason for slips and falls. Another cause may be an accidental contact with trash or equipment. The following are some control measures that may reduce this risk:

- Perform periodic inspections to identify slip and trip hazards.
- Avoid running cords across hallways and walkways. If it is necessary, it should be on a temporary basis and should be taped down or covered with matting.

Inadequate Lighting

Areas of inadequate lighting should be avoided because they can hide obstacles that are in the way. Work areas should be well lit. Light switches should be in an accessible area when entering the room. It is unreasonable to have to travel across a poorly lit room to turn on the lights. When entering a dark or poorly lit room, let your eyes adjust to the change. Pay particular attention to the proper illumination in walkways, staircases, hallways, and basements. There are a number of ways to prevent or control inadequate lighting conditions:

- Task lamps can be effective in supplementing lighting.
- Diffuse light to help prevent shadows. Indirect lighting and task lighting are recommended, especially where work areas are separated by dividers.
- A light-colored matte finish paint should be used on walls, ceilings, and floors to reduce glare.
- Regular maintenance of the lights should be put into place.