

Slips, Trips, and Falls – Don't Be a Victim

Common Causes

Slips can occur when floors or other working surfaces become slick due to wet or oily processes, floor cleaning, or leaks. Materials and debris left in walkways are also common causes of slips. **Trips** can occur due to uneven floors or working surfaces, protruding nails and boards, bunched floor mats intended to prevent slipping, holes or depressions in working surfaces, or step risers on stairs that are not uniform in height. Both slips and trips can result in falls. **Falls** can also occur when ladders are not maintained properly, when stairways and elevated working surfaces are not designed correctly, or when employees climb onto elevated surfaces such as truck cabs or trailers.

Resulting Injuries:

Slips, trips, and falls constitute a majority of general industry accidents and often result in back injuries, strains, sprains, contusions, and fractures. Slips, trips, and falls can also be fatal. In fact, these types of accidents are second only to motor vehicle accidents as a cause of fatalities. Falling from even a short distance can have serious consequences.

Prevention

Employers can prevent slips, trips, and falls in the workplace by adhering to the following guidelines (and making sure that these guidelines are recognized and followed by their employees):

- Where there are wet or oily processes, maintain drainage and provide false floors, platforms, nonslip mats/floor surfaces, or other dry standing places where practicable.
- Use nonskid waxes and/or surface materials coated with grit to create nonslip surfaces in slippery zones such as toilet and shower areas.
- Require the use of slip-resistant footwear.
- Clean up floors and working surfaces promptly when they become wet.
- When it is possible, use prudent housekeeping procedures such as cleaning only one side of a passageway at a time.
- Always provide warning signs for wet or slippery floors.
- Provide floor plugs for equipment so power cords do not need to run across pathways.
- Temporary electrical cords that must cross aisles should be taped or anchored to the floor.
- Aisles and passageways should be sufficiently wide for easy movement and should be kept clear at all times.
- Reinstall or stretch carpets that bulge or have become bunched to prevent tripping hazards.
- Eliminate cluttered or obstructed work areas and keep all cabinet drawers closed.
- Provide good lighting for all halls, stairwells, ramps, and ladders — especially during night hours.
- Make sure stairs have proper handrails, that treads and risers are maintained, and that treads have a slip-resistant surface.
- Instruct workers to use the handrail on stairs, to avoid undue speed, and to maintain an unobstructed view of the stairs ahead of them, even if that means requesting help to manage a bulky load.
- Eliminate uneven floor surfaces.
- Make sure elevated storage and work surfaces have guardrails, toe boards, and a permanent means of access.
- Make sure that floor drains, pits, and other floor openings are covered or protected with guardrails.



- Use only properly maintained ladders with uniformly spaced rungs and nonslip safety feet to reach items. Do not use stools, chairs, or boxes as substitutes for ladders.
- Provide proper ladders and train employees how to inspect them and use them safely.
- Instruct employees not to climb on racks, equipment, or vehicles without proper handholds, ladders, or other aids.
- Train employees never to jump across hazards or from elevated surfaces.

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