

PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

We have all heard examples of the seriousness of slips, trips and falls in our business. They happen suddenly. They're totally unexpected. And the result of a slip, trip or fall can be painful and possibly end in permanent injury that could change your entire life.

The number and costs of slip, trip and fall injuries are high:

- to the **individual** in lost income, pain suffered and reduced quality of life
- to the **employer** in damages, administration and insurance costs, lost production and temporary absences from work
- to **society** with a loss of potential output, medical costs, and social security.



Most of these injuries result from slips or trips that happen at floor level, rather than from high places. The greatest percentage of these slips and trips occur on walking surfaces, such as floors and stairs.

Basically, slips and falls can happen almost anywhere and can be caused by a number of things. Trying to catch your balance when you slip, for example, can pull muscles, tear ligaments and cause permanent damage to your back, even if you avoid falling down.

Most trips, slips and falls are the result of unsure footing. They can occur on any surface that is covered with mud, snow, water, oil, ice, grease or indeed any other slippery substance. So whenever you see a spilled liquid on a floor, clean it up immediately.

Mats, rugs and runners are also hazardous if they slip or slide, or are torn, curled up or loose.

Uneven or defective surfaces, littered floors, telephone and/or electrical wires, open drawers or anything else that projects from the walking surface may cause a fall.

Rooms, work areas, hallways and especially steps should be kept free of equipment and other objects that block pedestrian traffic or present tripping hazards. When not in use, tools and other equipment should be kept in proper storage areas. Remember there's a place for everything and everything has its place.

A spill should be cleaned up immediately to eliminate the hazard. In addition to good housekeeping, there are some other employee practices that can help prevent slips, trips and falls.

- If you notice tripping hazards, such as bulges in carpeting, loose boards or raised edges, report these to your manager so repairs can be made.
- Place electrical wires and/or telephone cables so that they do not lie in travelled areas.
- Use handrails when travelling on stairs.
- Do not jump off raised surfaces.
- Carry only what you can reasonably handle and keep your balance.
- Wear sensible footwear at work at all times.

- Make sure the ground is level and well-graded.
- Keep storage areas and walkways free of holes, ruts and obstructions.
- Clean up spills of grease, oils, or other liquids at once. If it's not possible cover them with sand or some other absorbent material until they can be cleaned up. Someone might slip.
- Make sure there's adequate lighting. If a light is out, report it.
- Implement gritting/salting procedures, supplying adequate provision of materials and equipment to reduce ice formation during the colder months.
- Stay alert and always expect the unexpected at all levels.

The safety rules for preventing slips, trips and falls really are just 'common sense' rules, which you probably have heard dozens of times before. Nevertheless, a look at the statistics tells us that they need to be repeated until we do our part to prevent those disastrous slips, trips and falls, which are costing people time and money and a lot of pain as well. Let's concentrate on safety today and every day to prevent slips, trips and falls.

Be careful. Watch your step. Report all hazardous conditions to your manager immediately, unless you can take care of them.

The important thing is stay alert to the risk of slips, trips and falls and to report any problem areas.



Case study

A Tarmac employee went over on his ankle whilst standing on an uneven and poorly graded area of laid asphalt. He sustained a painful sprain to his ankle and four working days were lost.

As a result the ground surface was improved and a review of the current footwear issued was carried out.

Comments

(Ask the question 'Do you have any concerns about slips, trips or falls?')

QUESTIONS – (there may be more than one correct answer)

		A	B	C
1	At what level do most slips and trips happen?	Below floor level	Above 2 metres	Floor level
2	What do you need to do if you see a spillage?	Warn your mate	Leave it for the cleaner to sort out	Clean it up immediately
3	If you notice an area that has a re-occurring spillage, what should you do?	Avoid the area in case you slip	Tell your supervisor immediately	Investigate it when you have a spare moment
4	Which one of these would reduce your chance of a trip or slip?	Reading whilst walking	Using handrails on stairs	Wearing loose fitting shoes
5	What can increase your chance of a trip or slip?	Trailing cables across access areas	Untidy working area	Reporting loose floor tiles

