

Guidelines to prevent workplace slips, trips and falls

It's probably happened to most of us. That momentary lapse of inattention thinking about a personal problem or distracted by an activity that ends in a slip, trip or fall. It can lead to a variety of regrettable events ranging from a simple bruised shin to an extremely serious injury. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, slips, trips and falls make up the majority of general industry accidents, which account for:

- 15 percent of all accidental deaths per year, the second-leading cause behind motor vehicles
- About 25 percent of all reported injury claims per fiscal year
- More than 95 million lost work days per year – about 65 percent of all work days lost

In general, slips and trips occur due to a loss of traction between the shoe and the walking surface or an inadvertent contact with a fixed or moveable object which may lead to a fall. There are a variety of situations that may cause slips, trips and falls. Here are six guidelines to help you create a safer working environment for you and your employees.

1) Create Good Housekeeping Practices

Good housekeeping is critical. Safety and housekeeping go hand-in-hand. If your facility's housekeeping habits are poor, the result may be a higher incidence of employee injuries, ever-increasing insurance costs and regulatory citations. If an organization's facilities are noticeably clean and well organized, it is a good indication that its overall safety program is effective as well.

2) Reduce Wet or Slippery Surfaces

Walking surfaces account for a significant portion of injuries reported by state agencies. Traction on outdoor surfaces can change considerably when weather conditions change. Those conditions can then affect indoor surfaces as moisture is tracked in by pedestrian traffic. Traction control procedures should be constantly monitored for their effectiveness.

3) Avoid Creating Obstacles in Aisles and Walkways

Injuries can also result from trips caused by obstacles, clutter, materials and equipment in aisles, entranceways and stairwells. Proper housekeeping in work and traffic areas is still the most effective control measure in avoiding the proliferation of these types of hazards. This means having policies or procedures in place and allowing time for cleaning areas.

4) Create and Maintain Proper Lighting

Poor lighting in the workplace is associated with an increase in accidents.

5) Wear Proper Shoes

The shoes we wear can play a big part in preventing falls. The slickness of the soles and the type of heels worn need to be evaluated to avoid slips, trips and falls. Shoelaces need to be tied correctly.

6) Control Individual Behavior

This condition is the toughest to control. It is human nature to let our guard down for two seconds and be distracted by random thoughts or doing multiple activities. Being in a hurry will result in walking too fast or running which increases the chances of a slip, trip or fall. It's ultimately up to each individual to plan, stay alert and pay attention.