

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

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

According to the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), slip and fall accidents are the second leading cause of on-the-job deaths, second only to automobile accidents. The U.S. Department of Labor states that 15% of workplace deaths are caused by slips, trips and falls. Up to 9 million disabling slip and fall accidents happen each year, that's 25,000 per day. (National Safety Council).



Most of these accidents result from slips or trips that happen at floor level, rather than from high places. About 75 percent of these slips and trips occur on walking surfaces, such as floors, stairs and sidewalks. 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 any other slippery substance. So whenever you see spilled liquid on a floor, clean it up immediately.

Stairways present another tripping problem, whether they're a poorly lighted set inside a building or steps outside of a building. Material, cartons, boxes or other items should not be stored on stairs. Proper lighting, without glare, shadows or violent contrasts between floor areas, and the condition of workers' shoes are also important.

Inadequate lighting, wearing sunglasses in low-light areas, moving between areas of different lighting levels, and carrying oversized objects can obstruct one's vision and result in a slip or a trip. Walking too fast or running is also a major problem, as is not using handrails.

Remembering can prevent falls. Remember to:

1. Carry only what you can reasonably handle and keep your balance.
2. Stay alert and always expect the unexpected at all levels.

Be careful. Watch your step. Report all hazardous conditions to your supervisor immediately, unless you can take care of them. The important thing is not to let slips and falls put you down.

Perhaps the best way to prevent slips and falls is good housekeeping in every work area. Rooms, work areas, hallways and especially steps should be kept free of equipment and other objects that block traffic or present tripping hazards. When not in use, tools and other equipment should be kept in proper storage places. **Remember there's a place for everything and everything has its place.**

1. A spill should be cleaned up immediately to eliminate the danger. In addition to good housekeeping, there are some other employee practices that can help prevent slips and falls:
2. If you notice tripping hazards, such as bulges in carpeting, loose floor boards or raised edges, report these to the supervisor so repairs can be made.
3. Place electrical cords and/or telephone cables so that they do not lie in heavily traveled areas. If they must lie in heavily traveled areas, anchor them with electrical tape.
4. Housekeepers should mop only half of a hallway at once, leaving the other half open for passage. They should take time to post 'Wet Floor' signs. You and others should respect the signs.
5. Use handrails when traveling on stairs.
6. Do not climb on storeroom shelving. If you must reach high shelves, never substitute crates, boxes or other objects for ladders.
7. Make sure stepladders are equipped with safety feet and are in excellent condition.
8. Wear proper footwear on the job at all times.

The goal is to NOT slip, trip or fall, but the possibility of a fall still exists. The best ways to prevent this from occurring include:

- **Work Smart**—Use all safety equipment and procedures to reduce the risks.
- **Do daily stretching exercises to increase your flexibility;** especially of the hips and back....Be GUMBY.
- How is your balance and stability standing on one foot and reaching with your other leg or one or both hands in all different directions and at various heights?? This is another key question to ask yourself.



The most important protection for your feet is wearing proper footwear for the job you have.

- The soles and heels should be slip-resistant.
- If applicable to your job, the toe of the shoe should resist crushing injuries (Steel Toe).
- The shoe should support the ankle and foot by having a good arch support or cushion.
- You can also purchase arch supports or cushions for your shoes and work boots that will reduce stress to your feet, knees and back.

The safety rules for preventing slips and falls can not be understated. You would think that it is "common sense", but it is not when you look at the number of slip and fall injuries. A look at the statistics tells us that slip and fall prevention tips need to be repeated until we do our part to prevent those disastrous slips 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 and falls!

You must remember that your body can only protect you from injury if you give it what it needs to protect you: Flexibility, Strength Training, CardioVascular Activities, Proper Daily Food Choices, Water and SLEEP.