

SLIP, TRIP AND FALL PREVENTION

Slips, trips and falls can result in injuries with lasting effects and even death. It is important to understand how slips, trips and falls happen, how to identify hazards and how to eliminate or minimize the hazards.

Slips happen because of a lack of friction or traction between a person's footwear and the walking surface. Common causes of slips to look for in the workplace are:

- Spills
- Surfaces that are wet or oily
- Hazards created from weather (e.g. puddles and ice)
- Loose rugs or mats



Trips occur when your foot strikes or hits an object, which causes a person to lose their balance. Common causes of trips to look for in the workplace are:

- Obstructions and clutter on the floor (e.g. power cords, boxes, and open drawers)
- Wrinkled or curled up mats
- Poor lighting
- Uneven or irregular walking surfaces



Falls can result from a slip or a trip when a person's center of gravity is shifted and balance is lost. In addition to slips and trips, other causes of falls to look for in the workplace are:

- Obstructed view (e.g. carrying large items)
- Not paying attention to the surroundings
- Not using appropriate equipment (e.g. standing on a chair, table, or other surface with wheels)



Follow these tips to prevent slips, trips and falls.

- Clean up spills immediately.
- Install warning signs for wet floor areas (including freshly mopped floors).
- Wear shoes with good support and slip-resistant soles appropriate for the job task.
- Remove tripping hazards in walkways, doorways and stairs. Keep drawers and cabinet doors closed when possible.
- Keep frequently used items in easy to reach areas. Obtain step stools to access items too high to reach when standing on the floor.
- Utilize handrails when ascending and descending stairs.
- Utilize carts to transport large items.
- Walk in designated paths when available.
- Ensure adequate lighting is available.
- Reduce walking pace when approaching corners, intersections, or walking surface changes.
- Stay alert when walking and address any new hazards before proceeding.
- Report identified hazards to prevent a possible injury.
- When walking on icy or slippery areas:
 - o Wear shoes or boots with soles that provide extra traction.
 - o Use special care when entering and exiting vehicles. Use the vehicle for support.
 - o Walk with feet spread out slightly and toes pointed outward.
 - o Extend arms out to the sides to maintain balance.
 - o Take short steps or shuffle for stability.

How to Prevent Slips, Trips, and Falls

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Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls in the Workplace

Know what slips, trips, and falls are, their causes, existing regulations, and how to prevent them.

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|6 min read

What are Slips, Trips, and Falls?

Slips, trips, and falls are among the most common hazards in the workplace. They put many workers at risk of sprains, strains, cuts, bruises, fractures, and other injuries. At worst, they can also lead to death, especially in high-risk occupations such as construction. However, with adequate training and safety practices, companies can keep their personnel safe from these hazards.

For context, slips occur when there's little to no traction between the footwear and the walking surface, causing a person to lose their balance. On the other hand, tripping happens when a person's foot hits an object or steps down to a lower, uneven surface. Any of the two can disrupt a person's balance and make them lose their footing.

Lastly, falls (being the [leading cause](#) of fatalities among construction workers) can happen to anyone if they [stumble and fall](#) too far off their center balance. This commonly occurs for those [working at heights](#).

Slips, Trips, and Falls in Numbers

The [US Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#) reports alarming rates of slip, trip, and fall incidents in 2022. Their most recent data show that slips, trips, and falls are among the top causes of fatal and non-fatal injuries in the workplace:

Common Causes and Risk Factors

Slips, trips, and falls can happen due to many reasons—from uneven working surfaces to unsafe ladder positions. Knowing the causes can help managers assess risk factors and devise ways to prevent them.

Here are the causes and risk factors for each:

Slips

- Wet spills (e.g., water, mud, grease, oil, food, blood, etc.)
- Dry product spills (e.g., powder, dust, wood chips, granules, plastic wraps)
- Weather hazards (e.g., ice, snow)
- Concrete, ceramic tile, or marble floors
- Sloped or uneven walking surfaces
- Wet, muddy, greasy shoes
- Ramps or planks without skid- or slip-resistant surfaces
- Climbing ladders

Trips

- Clutter on the floor
- Obstructed view
- Poor lighting
- Uncovered cables, wires, hoses, and extension cords
- Open drawers, cabinets, doors, etc.
- Uneven walkways
- Unmarked steps or ramps
- Missing floor tiles and bricks

Falls

- Weak or damaged ladders
- Ledges without proper railing
- Carrying heavy objects
- Failure to use guardrails on scaffolding
- Unprotected edges
- Unsafely positioned ladders
- Misused fall protection and height access equipment

Slips, Trips, and Falls Hazards

To give you a comprehensive idea, here's a list of the most frequently occurring injuries associated with slips, trips, and falls hazards:

- **Sprains and strains** – When a person slips or trips and tries to catch themselves or regain balance, they may twist or stretch their muscles or ligaments, leading to sprains or strains.
- **Fractures and broken bones** – Falling from a height or landing forcefully on a hard surface can cause fractures or breaks in bones of the wrists, hips, and ankles.

- **Contusions and bruises** – Impacts with the ground or objects during a fall can cause contusions, commonly known as bruises, from damaged blood vessels beneath the skin.
- **Head injuries** – Falls that involve striking the head on a hard surface can cause traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), which can range from mild concussions to more severe cases.
- **Cuts and lacerations** – Falls may involve contact with sharp or rough objects, leading to cuts and lacerations.
- **Back and spinal cord injuries (SCI)** – Falls that involve landing on the back or experiencing a jarring impact can cause damage to the spine, such as herniated discs, spinal fractures, or spinal cord injuries.
- **Neck injuries** – These are sometimes a result of spinal injuries or damage to the muscles, ligaments, or tendons in the neck.

OSHA Regulations

The Occupational Safety and Health Standards 1910 Subpart D (Walking-Working Surfaces) provides general standards for walking-working surfaces, such as passageways, warehouses, storage rooms, service rooms, and working areas.

The 1910.22 Regulations outline several points for safe working surfaces, including the following:

- Keep workroom floors clean, orderly, and dry.
- Provide safe means of entering and exiting from walking surfaces.
- Inspect the working surface to keep it in good condition.
- Repair hazardous floors as soon as possible.

7 Tips for Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls

Fortunately, most slip, trip, and fall incidents are avoidable. By using the right safety tools and training employees, companies can prevent these incidents from happening. Here are some ways to prevent slips, trips, and falls in the workplace:

How to Prevent Slips, Trips, and Falls



Good Housekeeping

- Keep clutter away from the floor to prevent injuries.
- Close drawers when not in use.
- Put boxes away from the walkways.
- Store cables in protective covers.



Adequate Lighting

- Make sure there's enough light on walkways, stairs, halls, ramps, and exits.
- Report malfunctioning lights to appropriate authorities.



Safety Signs

- Alert workers of spill accidents and other trip hazards using safety signs.



Spill Cleanup

- Clean up spills as soon as you see them.
- Sweep up clutter and debris regularly.



Proper Footwear

- Wear non-slip shoes or waterproof footwear in slip-prone areas.
- Avoid using sandals, open-toed shoes, and high heels in slippery or uneven surface.



Floor Quality

- Check your walking surfaces for uneven areas, holes, and other damages.
- Install safety mats and floor markings in hazardous workspaces.



Plans and Protocols

- Follow OSHA guidelines on Safe Walking-Working Surfaces.
- Conduct toolbox and safety talks to inform employees of essential safety practices.

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How to Prevent Slips Trips and Falls in the Workplace

1. **Practicing good housekeeping** – A slip-free workspace begins with housekeeping. Removing clutter helps tidy up the floor and makes it walkable for everyone in the workplace.

2. **Providing adequate lighting in walking areas** – Workers can navigate through spaces better if there is enough light. Given this, it's best to place proper lighting in access and egress points such as halls, ramps, stairs, and exits.
3. **Installing safety signs** – Doing so warns people about walking in hazardous spaces to keep them safe. For example, construction safety uses warning lines, control zones, and designated areas to mark which areas are passable or restricted.
4. **Cleaning spills immediately** – Proper cleaning ensures that the floor is free from hazardous elements so that people can walk safely. To keep water from the floor, you may also consider various dewatering methods and equipment such as a sump pump.
5. **Making sure proper footwear is worn** – Non-slip shoes with good traction protect workers from static electricity, falling objects, explosions, exposure to hazardous substances, and other risks.
6. **Maintaining and improving floor quality** – Modifying the floor space can go a long way to ensure safety from slips, trips, and falls. Fall protection can be improved by inspecting floors regularly and investing in non-slippery flooring options, among others.
7. **Implementing safety plans and protocols** – A well-thought-out safety plan cements all efforts in promoting fall protection, especially in high-risk workspaces. This plan must include in-depth risk assessments, safety standards and practices, training, regular inspections, equipment guidelines, and toolbox talks.