

Safety

NEWSLETTER



The Silent Threat Beneath your Feet: Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls in the Workplace

Slips, trips, and falls (STFs) are among the most common, and most preventable workplace hazards. They affect every industry and every employee, from road crews and hospital staff to correctional officers, court personnel, and office workers. Despite their prevalence, these hazards often go unnoticed until an incident occurs. Recognizing the warning signs is the first step toward prevention.

Understanding what STF hazards look like and the conditions that create them empowers organizations to take proactive measures to protect employees and visitors. In this article, we will explore the universal risk factors that can appear in any workplace, including slippery or uneven surfaces, clutter and obstructions, weather-related risks, poor lighting, and hazards associated with stairs, ladders, and transitions. We will also share practical strategies to prevent and mitigate these risks before they lead to injuries.

Recognizing Risk Factors:

Before we can prevent slips, trips, and falls, we need to understand where they come from. Recognizing common risk factors in your workplace is the first step toward creating a safer environment.

Wet or Uneven Surfaces:

- When indoors, recognizing spills, puddles or tracked in water or other fluids like cleaning residues on the floor.
- Outdoor activities watching for mud, ice snow, or pooled water.
- Uneven surfaces can include potholes, cracked pavement, loose tiles, or transitions between surfaces.

Poor housekeeping:

- Cluttered hallways, stairways, or office areas with boxes, files, or equipment.
- Cords stretched across walkways, worksites, or offices.
- Tools and materials left in common paths for walking or travel.

Weather conditions:

- Looking out for Ice or snow on sidewalks, stairs, and parking lots.
- During inclement weather, be aware of wet floors near entrances from tracked-in moisture.
- In work zones, watching for mud or slick spots.

Inadequate lighting:

- Walking through dim corridors, stairwells, or outdoor work areas.
- Shadows that obscure hazards or glare that affect visibility.
- Parking lots or outdoor walkways with insufficient lighting at night.
- Storage rooms or basements with burned-out bulbs or no overhead lights.
- Emergency exits with poorly lit or non-functioning exit signs.
- Construction zones with temporary lighting that cast heavy shadows.
- Hallways with glare from windows or reflective surfaces.
- Areas with flickering lights that make obstacles hard to see.

Stairs, Ladders and Transitions:

- Look for stairs for worn treads, missing handrails, or inconsistent riser heights.
- Inspect for ladders that are unstable, damaged, or used improperly.
- Flooring transitions (e.g., carpet to tile, concrete to asphalt) create uneven edges or trip points.

Prevention Strategies and Best Practices:

Recognizing hazards is only half the battle and prevention is where real safety begins. Every workplace, from offices to outdoor job sites, can implement simple yet effective strategies to reduce the risk of slips, trips, and falls. These measures range from engineering controls like non-slip flooring and proper lighting to administrative practices such as housekeeping policies and weather preparedness. By combining pro-active inspections, employee training, and clear communication, organizations can create safer environments and significantly lower the chances of injury.

Wet or Uneven Surfaces

- Install non-slip flooring and mats at entrances.
- Clean spills immediately or escalate to the proper cleanup crews.
- Apply ice melt or sand on outdoor surfaces.
- Regularly inspect and repair uneven flooring.
- Mark transitions with signage or contrasting tape.

Poor Housekeeping

- Enforce housekeeping policies for clear walkways and proper storage.
- Use cord covers and secure cables.
- Schedule routine inspections or set aside time each week for organization.
- Encourage employees to report hazards promptly.

Weather Conditions

- Apply de-icing agents and remove snow promptly.
- Place absorbent mats at entrances.
- Use wet floor signage.
- Provide slip-resistant footwear for employees.
- Adjust work schedules during severe weather.

Inadequate Lighting

- Install adequate lighting in all work areas.
- Include emergency lighting for power outages.
- Regularly check and replace bulbs.
- Use motion-sensor lights for outdoor spaces.
- Ensure stairways and transitions are well-lit and clearly marked.

Stairs, Ladders, and Transitions

- Inspect stairs regularly and repair damaged steps.
- Ensure handrails are secure and meet safety standards.
- Train employees on proper ladder use.
- Inspect ladders before each use.
- Highlight flooring transitions with contrasting strips or signage.
- Level uneven transitions where possible.

Slips, trips, and falls are not minor inconveniences, they are a leading cause of workplace injuries and fatalities. By recognizing hazards like wet surfaces, poor housekeeping, weather related risks, and inadequate lighting, organizations can take simple yet effective steps to prevent accidents. A proactive approach saves lives, reduces costs, and creates safer environments for everyone.

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