



5-minute safety talk

Slips, Trips and Falls

More than 134,000 workers fell on the job in 2011. They didn't fall from ladders or rooftops. They fell from the same level, without elevation, due to loss of balance, tripping or slipping on a slick surface. They were injured seriously enough to miss days from work, according to *2014 Injury Facts*[®], the statistical report on unintentional injuries by the National Safety Council. The number of incidents could be higher due to underreporting.

Why is walking such a hazard?

Slips, trips and falls are the No. 2 cause of nonfatal injury in the workplace resulting in days away from work, outranked only by overexertion. It's a persistent problem, but one that can be prevented. Often slips, trips and falls can be caused by a lack of awareness of surroundings. We walk all the time, increasing our risk of falling, and we're not thinking about the task of walking. We're on autopilot.

It's also easy to get distracted while walking. Checking the phone, eating and talking to someone while walking all increase the risk of a trip or fall.

Other causes include:

- Wet floors
- Uneven or icy parking lots
- Limited visibility around corners
- Cluttered walkways
- Running on stairs
- Not holding the handrail in stairways
- Cords across pathways
- Carrying too much

Lack of reporting adds to the problem

An employer shouldn't place blame on any employee who falls, especially since some falls are related to a person's physical ability. Fear of embarrassment or retribution for reporting such incidents only leads to an unsafe workplace.

Many causes of slips, trips and falls can be prevented by employers, but employees provide the best feedback and are key players in identifying hazards. Employers should reinforce a culture that makes safety a high priority, with the understanding that even minor incidents should be reported. There is no better way to identify and mitigate hazards before someone is injured.

Investigate reports of slips and falls

Employers should focus on the areas where most incidents occur:

- Doorways
- Ramps
- Cluttered hallways
- Heavy traffic areas
- Uneven surfaces
- Areas prone to wetness and spills

Well-maintained floors and a good cleaning program can help reduce the hazard. Employers should examine floor surfaces and install slip-resistant material in work areas that can become wet, oily or dirty. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also recommends workers wear slip-resistant footwear. Some employers issue shoes for employees because the importance of footwear cannot be overstated.

How to get Employees Off Autopilot

Environmental changes, alone, cannot protect employees. Management's commitment to safety, and communication between managers and their workers, is critical to the success of a safety culture.

Through training, employees will learn to make sure aisles are clear, floors are clean, cords and carpets are taped down, and signs are present to warn of slippery areas. They also can learn to make behavioral changes to reduce the risk of falls, such as balancing properly while walking, learning to recover from a slip and looking where they are going.

Companies that implement behavioral, environmental or a combination of measures to reduce slips, trips and falls usually see incident rates decline.



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