



Prevention of Slips, Trips and Falls in the workplace

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Introduction

Slips, trips and falls are among the most common workplace accidents. They can lead to serious injuries and even fatalities.

Preventing these incidents is crucial for ensuring a safe and productive work environment.

What are Slips, Trips and Falls

Trips, slips, and falls are common accidents that occur when someone loses their balance and falls due to various hazards.

These incidents can happen on the same level (like slipping on a wet floor) or from a height (like falling off a ladder).

In Canadian workplaces, over 42,000 workers are injured annually due to falls, with 66% of these falls resulting from slips and trips on the same level.

Falls from heights, such as ladders or stairs, account for the remaining 34%. These accidents can lead to serious injuries, including fractures, sprains, and even fatalities.

Maintaining good housekeeping, using proper signage, and wearing appropriate footwear are essential steps to prevent these accidents.

Causes of Slips, Trips and Falls

- **Slips:** Occur when there is too little friction between footwear and the walking surface. Common causes include wet or oily surfaces, spills, weather hazards and loose rugs or mats.
- **Trips:** Happen when your foot hits an object, causing you to lose balance. Common causes include clutter, uneven surfaces, poor lighting and uncovered cables.
- **Falls:** Result from slips or trips but can also occur at heights. Common causes include unstable ladders, lack of guardrails and improper use of equipment.

Prevention Strategies

There are many ways to reduce the risks of a slip, trip or fall and effectively prevent them from occurring. Some common ways to help reduce these risks are...

Housekeeping:

- Keep walkways and work areas clean and free from clutter
- Ensure spills are cleaned up immediately
- Use signage to warn of wet floors and other hazards

Flooring

- Use slip-resistant flooring in areas prone to getting wet
- Ensure mats and rugs are securely fastened to the floor
- Repair any damaged flooring promptly

Lighting

- Ensure all areas are well-lit, especially stairways and hallways
- Replace burnt-out bulbs immediately
- Use additional lighting in areas with poor natural light

Prevention Strategies

Footwear

- Encourage employees to wear appropriate footwear with good traction
- Provide guidelines on suitable footwear for different work environments

Training and Awareness

- Conduct regular training sessions on the importance of preventing slips, trips and falls
- Encourage employees to report hazards immediately
- Display posters and reminders about safety practices

Equipment and Tools

- Ensure ladders and other equipment are in good condition and used properly
- Provide guardrails and handrails where necessary
- Use cable covers to prevent tripping over cords and cables

Employer Responsibilities

The OSHA states that safety responsibilities need to be shared between employer and employee and have defined the role employers must play in preventing slips, trips and falls in the workplace.

Employer must:

- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of workers
- Provide information, instruction and supervision to workers to protect their health and safety
- Acquaint workers and supervisors with any slip, trip or fall hazard in the work and in the handling, storage and use of any article, device or equipment

Worker Responsibilities

Just as employers have duties and responsibilities to ensure the safety of their workers, workers must also do their part.

Workers must:

- Report known slip, trip or fall hazards to the employer or supervisor
- Use or wear equipment, protective devices or clothing required by the employer
- Report to the employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device which may endanger them or other workers

Conclusion

Preventing slips, trips and falls requires a proactive approach and the cooperation of all employees. By following these strategies, workplaces can significantly reduce the risk of these common accidents and create a safer environment for everyone.