

Preventing falls caused by slips and trips

The majority of falls (about 70%) happen on the same level resulting from slips and trips. The remaining (about 30%) are falls from a height.

This document will summarize information on what the BLS considers “falls on the same level” caused by slips and trips.

Slips

Slips happen where there is too little friction or traction between footwear and the walking surface. Common causes of slips are:

- Wet or oily surfaces
- Occasional spills
- Weather hazards
- Loose, unanchored rugs or mats
- Flooring or other walking surfaces that do not have the same degree of traction in all areas

Trips

Trips happen when your foot collides (strikes, hits) an object causing you to lose balance and eventually fall. Common causes of tripping are:

- Obstructed view
- Poor lighting
- Clutter in your way
- Wrinkled carpet
- Uncovered cables
- Uneven steps, thresholds, and walking surfaces

How to prevent falls due to slips and trips

Slips and trips result from an unintended or unexpected change between the feet and the walking surface. Good housekeeping, quality of walking surfaces (flooring), selection of proper footwear, and appropriate pace of walking are critical for preventing fall incidents.

Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is the first and most important variable in preventing falls due to slips and trips. It includes:

- Cleaning all spills immediately
- Marking spills and wet areas
- Mopping or sweeping debris from floors
- Removing obstacles from walkways and always keeping walkways free of clutter
- Securing (tacking, taping, etc.) mats, rugs, and carpets that do not lay flat
- Always closing file cabinet or storage drawers
- Covering cables that cross walkways
- Keeping working areas and walkways well lit

Without good housekeeping practices, any other preventive measures such as installation of sophisticated flooring, specialty footwear or training on walking techniques and safe falling will never be fully effective.

Flooring

Changing or modifying walking surfaces is the next level of preventing slips and trips. Recoating or replacing floors, installing mats, abrasive strips or abrasive-filled paint-on coating and metal or synthetic decking can further improve safety and reduce risk of falling. However, remember that high-tech flooring requires good housekeeping as much as any other flooring. In addition, resilient, non-slip flooring prevents or reduces foot fatigue and contributes to slip prevention measures.

Footwear

In workplaces where floors may be oily or wet, or where workers spend considerable time outdoors, prevention of fall incidents should focus on selecting proper footwear. Since there is no footwear with anti-slip properties for every condition, consultation with manufacturers is highly recommended. Properly fitting footwear increases comfort and prevents fatigue which improves safety for the employee.

What you can do to avoid falling at work

You can reduce the risk of slipping on wet flooring by:

- Taking your time and paying attention to where you are going
- Adjusting your stride to a pace that is suitable for the walking surfaces and the tasks you are doing
- Walking with feet pointed slightly outward
- Making wide turns at corners

You can reduce the risk of tripping by:

- Keeping areas clear from clutter or obstructions
- Keeping flooring in good condition
- Always using installed light sources that provide sufficient lighting for your tasks
- Using a flashlight if you enter a dark room
- Making sure that the things you are carrying or pushing do not prevent you from seeing any obstructions, spills, etc.

Site specific requirements:

Employee participants:

Date:
