

Be on the Lookout: Avoid Slips, Trips and Falls



Does your company have a story similar to the one about the third-shift leader who slipped on a plastic bag and sustained a concussion and broken wrist? Or the picker who tripped on a trailing cable and incurred a fractured hip? Or the driver whose fall from a forklift resulted in a debilitating back injury?

These stories represent just a few of the 25,000 slip, trip and fall incidents that occur in the United States every day and are responsible for some 95 million lost work days per year. In 2011 combined occurrences of slips, trips and falls rendered U.S. businesses \$17.3 billion in direct costs, and the U.S. Department of Labor reports that these types of incidents are the number-one cause for industrial injury.

The statistics provide ample evidence of the damage a slip, trip or fall can incur. One of the most effective prevention techniques is adopting the attitude that safety is an area of responsibility for everyone in the organization. It's also important to understand that slips, trips and falls are preventable, not the presumed outcome of working in a busy, wet, dirty or challenging industrial environment.

By the numbers

Slips, Trips and Falls

- Cause employees to miss an average of **8** days of work
- Cause over **20%** of disabling injuries in the workplace
- Are the **#1** cause of workplace fatalities

Falls on the same level

- Occur more frequently than falls from heights
- Caused the **2nd** highest number of workplace injuries in 2013
- Are responsible for **65%** of fall-related injuries

Constant attention to slip, trip and fall safety is key to reducing:

- slip, trip and fall incidents
- lost workdays
- compromised productivity
- business costs associated with worker injury



Anticipate and plan ... or learn the harder way: from experience

Both employers and employees hold responsibility for workplace safety, but employers must initiate and reinforce safety protocols and clearly spell out safety responsibilities and expectations.

A proactive safety plan that specifically addresses slips, trips and falls not only enhances worker safety but also adds a layer of protection to a company's bottom line, which can be impacted by workers' compensation payments, government fines or costly equipment/facility remediation requirements.

Incorporate specifics into your safety plan

One of the most effective strategies to keep workers safe from unexpected slips, trips or falls is to reduce the element of surprise within the physical environment and raise the level of safety awareness within the minds of all personnel. This goal can be accomplished by specifically addressing slips, trips and falls within your larger safety plan.

No shortage of information exists on safety measures to reduce slip, trip and fall incidents, and your industry association or insurance carrier may have specific suggestions pertaining to your facility. General guidelines include these standard safety precautions:

- **Identify hazards**
Identify potential slip, trip and fall hazards in your workplace: review incident records, inspect locations, consider impact of changing environmental conditions.
- **Evaluate risk**
Evaluate the potential risk of each hazard: number of employees who could be affected, potential frequency of risk, potential impact of the surrounding area or equipment.
- **Determine controls**
Determine controls that can be instituted to reduce each hazard: relocating or removing dangerous environmental factors, limiting accessibility to higher-risk areas, providing appropriate footwear or personal protective equipment.
- **Review the environment**
Regularly review the work environment: maintain regular housekeeping, ensure good lighting, keep equipment in proper working condition.
- **Engage employees**
Engage employees to build their knowledge and improve compliance: hold regularly scheduled safety meetings or "tailgate" talks, ask for and act upon employee input regarding safety issues, recognize employees with excellent safety records or ideas.
- **Record, review, improve**
Maintain records of all incidents and continually review and improve the work environment and safety initiatives: make employees feel "safe" to report slip, trip and fall or other safety concerns, keep safety as a live and ongoing topic with employees and management, make changes when necessary.

The process of identifying slip, trip and fall hazards provides employers with a valuable tool to improve safety records and a framework for clarifying safety expectations on the floor, in the warehouse or in the yard. Employers who show a visible commitment to worker safety also earn employee respect and improve compliance. Additionally, ongoing attention to commonly overlooked slip, trip and fall hazards underscores the notion that making a small fix now is easier than fixing a large problem later.



The Basics

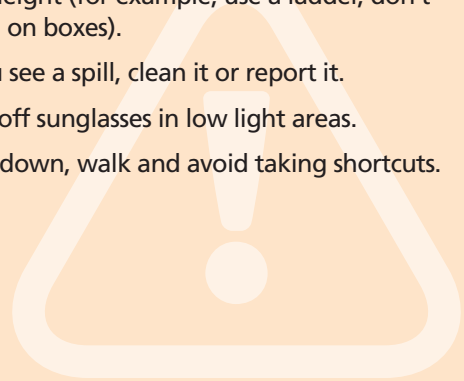
For employers

- Repair or replace comfort mats or other types of “homemade” mats when they become loose, damaged or misused.
- Set an example and set the expectation that spills are to be cleaned up immediately (regardless of the source or who actually spilled the material).
- Make sure to use proper signage and block off areas that are wet or in the process of being cleaned or dried.
- Replace or recondition sidewalks, stairs and parking lots that are in need of repair.
- In snowy and icy conditions ensure that parking areas and sidewalks are properly cleared, shoveled and de-iced and that employees wear proper footwear when walking to/from vehicles.
- Eliminate poor housekeeping habits, such as deferring clean-up until the end of the shift, especially in areas of high foot traffic.
- Ensure that workers wear the right footwear for the task.

The Basics

For employees

- Pay attention.
- Look where you’re going – eyes ahead, not on your cell phone.
- Wear nonskid shoes/appropriate footwear.
- Wear personal protective equipment that has been issued.
- Wear clothing that won’t get caught or that you can trip over.
- Only carry loads that you can see over.
- Use appropriate equipment to reach items at a height (for example, use a ladder, don’t stand on boxes).
- If you see a spill, clean it or report it.
- Take off sunglasses in low light areas.
- Slow down, walk and avoid taking shortcuts.



Randstad. Your partner in safety.

Randstad believes firmly in the value of a safe workplace and provides safety information to all talent through an initial safety orientation. In addition, Randstad’s safety teams coach and train talent at client sites during normal “tail-gate” safety topic meetings or other training sessions regarding workplace safety.

Randstad is poised and ready to deliver skilled and safety-trained talent for a full range of positions. With the right talent on board, just think what more you could do to drive your business success.



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