



SAFETY: it takes all of us

PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS CHECKLIST

Remember

Risk factors include physical hazards in the environment, age-related issues and health conditions. Reduce your risk and identify fall hazards in your workplace and home to prevent injuries and keep others safe.

Many people attribute falls to being clumsy or not paying attention, but many risk factors exist.

Reduce your risk of slips, trips and falls:

- Keep floors and surfaces clean and clear of clutter
- Maintain good lighting both indoors and on outdoor walkways
- Secure electrical and phone cords out of traffic areas
- Install handrails on all stairways
- Clean up spills immediately
- Wear sensible and proper footwear
- Never stand on a chair, table or surface with wheels
- Create open pathways to walk through by arranging furniture properly
- Check the condition of outdoor steps and walkways and repair as necessary
- Remove fallen leaves, snow and debris from outdoor walkways
- Be aware that alcohol or drugs, including prescription and over-the-counter medicine, can affect your balance and increase your risk of falling

Watch your step

Employees are 2.5 times more likely to suffer a disabling fall in an office setting than anywhere else, according to the National Safety Council. The Council offers the following tips on avoiding fall hazards in the office:

- Walk – don't run
- Wear footwear that reduces the risk of slips, trips and falls
- Stay to the right in hallways – same as you would in vehicular traffic
- Remove obstructions such as wastebaskets and cords from walkways
- Always be sure to close file cabinets and desk drawers so they do not create a tripping hazard
- Be certain stairwells are well-lit and equipped with anti-skid strips and handrails

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National Safety Council
1121 SPRING LAKE DRIVE
ITASCA, IL 60143-3201
(800) 621-7619
NSC.ORG





5-minute safety talk

Slips, trips and falls

Slips, trips and falls are no laughing matter. They take a heavy toll in the number of workplace injuries and lost workdays across the country. Falls to the same level are one of the most common causes of injuries on the job, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Investigate slips

The incidence of slips, trips and falls at work may be even higher than the numbers show. Workers do not report many of the incidents because they are minor and make them appear clumsy, which is a mistake. To reduce slips, trips and falls, managers should stress the seriousness of all incidents and have employees inform them of even the most harmless ones. Minor incidents that are reported may be clues to troublesome areas needing repairs and may actually help prevent a major incident from occurring.

Investigations should focus on the following areas where most incidents occur:

- Doorways and other transitional areas
- Ramps
- Cluttered hallways
- Areas with heavy traffic
- Uneven surfaces
- Any area prone to wetness or spills

As long as people move, spills will occur; but a variety of products can reduce the chances that they will cause a fall. Some of the most popular products to reduce the risk of falls are slip-resistant floors, mats and footwear. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's guidelines on walking and working surfaces call for slip-resistant floor surfaces in work areas that are generally slippery because of wet, oily or dirty operations. OSHA also says workers should wear slip-resistant footwear to reduce slipping hazards.

Pick the right floor

The appropriate floor covering depends on its use. Here are some questions to consider when choosing an appropriate floor:

- What kinds of spills are likely?
- What are the sanitary requirements?
- Is noise a concern?
- Will the area have heavy traffic?
- What equipment must the floor hold?
- How will the floor be cleaned?
- Are aesthetic effects a concern?

Various nonskid floor coatings that increase traction also are available. Carpets provide good traction but can cause falls if they are worn or do not fit tightly. Make sure rug and runner edges are securely bound and beveled with rubber or plastic to avoid catching on shoes or boots.

Slip-resistant mats provide added protection in spots where spills are likely, such as in areas with heavy traffic or where customers and employees may track in water and dirt. Typical places for mats are at entrances to locations, around equipment that sprays water, in service aisles of restaurants, in produce sections of grocery stores and on bathroom floors.

Some mats are made to direct water, grease and other spills away from the walking surface. An added benefit of mats is they can relieve back and leg strain.

Choose shoes made to grip

Safety experts recommend footwear with slip-resistant soles for people who work in businesses where surfaces are wet or greasy, or employees move rapidly from one type of floor to another. Employees prefer footwear that's comfortable, stylish and durable.

Take control with training

Environmental changes alone cannot protect employees and guests. To further reduce the risk of falls, employees should check that aisles are clear, floors are clean, signs are present to warn people of slippery areas, and that guests get the assistance they need.

Managers should stress these safety reminders:

- If you drop it, pick it up
- If you spill it, wipe it up
- Go where you are looking, and look where you are going

Not all falls occur because of wet floors, cluttered aisles or missed steps. There are behavioral changes that can be learned to reduce the risk of falls or minimize their impact such as:

- Walking techniques that use feet as probes
- How to balance properly by keeping the head up and maintaining the body's natural center of gravity
- Ways to get the feet underneath quickly to recover balance after an initial slip
- How to protect the most vulnerable parts of the body, such as the head and spine, if you do fall

Whether companies implement behavioral, environmental or a combination of measures to reduce slips, trips and falls, their incident rates usually decline.

Visit nsc.org/members
for more safety tips





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SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

First Aid Tips

If you find or witness a victim who has slipped, tripped or fallen:

- Call 911 for large bone fractures or any dislocation.
- Do not move the victim. Allow him to support the injured area but not to move it.
- Put a plastic bag containing ice and water on the injured area. Put a barrier such as a cloth between the plastic bag and the skin. Apply the cold for 20 minutes and then remove it for 30 minutes. Repeat the process until emergency assistance arrives.
- Wrap an arm or leg injury in an elastic bandage. The bandage can be placed over the ice-water bag.
- Elevate the injured body part if it does not cause pain.

Get certified through NSC

NSC provides CPR & AED training through both classroom and online courses. Find a training location near you, or view a demonstration of NSC online training at nsc.org/onlinetraining.

Mind Your P's and Q's

Walking surfaces can be unpredictable. Whether it's a change in elevation or brutal weather, always be proactive in preventing slips, trips and falls:

- Wear appropriate shoes for the task at hand
- When getting out of a vehicle, create points of contact by holding onto the door, roof or assist handle
- In inclement weather, wipe shoes well on rugs when entering buildings to prevent tracking in water, snow and salt
- Avoid distracted walking and remain alert for any surface changes (i.e. tile to carpet or heightened sidewalk blocks)
- Six out of 10 falls happen at home – adding handrails, maintaining good housekeeping and cleaning spills will help minimize risk
- Follow basic safety rules when using ladders: check its condition before use and maintain 3 points contact on the ladder at all times

A Strong Core: Restoring your Balance

Even though some risks are beyond our control, there are many simple steps you can take to prevent injury. Located in the center of your body, the core muscles are a linchpin in everything the top and bottom of your body does. When these muscles are weak, it can lead to instability, pain and, ultimately, a higher chance of slips, trips and falls. Doing these exercises can help strengthen your core, lower your chances of debilitating falls and restore balance back into your body:

- **Forearm Plank:** Start by lying on your stomach with your elbows underneath your shoulders. Lift your body up so that your toes and forearms are your points of contact with the floor, and that your back is flat. Hold this position for 30 seconds at a time; repeat five times.
- **Bridge:** Start position: Lie on your back with your feet hip-width apart on a mat or a flat, level surface. As you inhale, press down with your heels and forearms and raise your pelvis off the floor. Keeping a steady breath, hold for 30 seconds. Repeat up to three times.
- **Side Plank:** Get into the same position as your forearm plank. Roll onto your right forearm and extend yourself up with the opposite arm in the air. Be sure to keep your hip off the ground. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

Green Cross Tip

Yoga and pilates are two popular methods of exercise that incorporate these core exercises. Find a class near you!

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