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## What can you do to avoid falling at work?

It is important to remember that safety is everyone's business. Although it is employers' responsibility to provide a safe work environment for all employees, employees can also improve their own safety.

### 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 surface and the tasks you are doing,
- walking with your feet pointed slightly outward, and
- making wide turns at corners.

### You can reduce the risk of tripping by:

- always using installed light sources that provide sufficient light for your tasks or,
- using a flashlight if you enter a dark room where there is no light, and
- ensuring that things you are carrying or pushing do not prevent you from seeing any obstructions, spills, etc.

# Risk Services Notes

## Is prevention of falls important?

There is an old joke that falling never hurt anyone, it is the stopping that hurts you. In real life, falling at work is no joke. In fiscal year 2006-07, 22% of all the State of Florida's workers' compensation injuries were due to slips, trips and fall accidents. Not to mention a great economical loss, it amounts to a lot of pain and suffering and sometimes even death. All of these, in most of cases, did not have to happen. What is needed is:

- understanding how slip, trip and fall accidents happen,
- identifying the trouble areas, and
- eliminating or minimizing the hazards.

## How do falls happen?

Statistics show that the majority (50 percent) of falls happen on the same level resulting from slips and trips. The remaining occurrences are falls from a height. This Risk Services' Note will concentrate on "falls on the same level" (slips and trips).

### Slips

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

- wet or oily surfaces,
- spills,
- weather hazards,
- loose, unanchored rugs or mats, and 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 your balance and eventually fall. Common causes of tripping are:

- obstructed view,
- poor lighting,
- clutter in your way,
- wrinkled carpeting,
- uncovered cables,
- bottom drawers not being closed, and
- uneven (steps, thresholds) walking surfaces.

## How to prevent falls due to slips and trips?

Both slips and trips result from some kind of unintended or unexpected change in the contact between your feet and the ground or walking surface. This shows that good house-

keeping, the quality of walking surfaces (flooring), selection of proper footwear, and appropriate pace of walking are critical for preventing fall accidents.

### Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is the first and the most important (fundamental) level of 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 them 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.

### Flooring

Changing or modifying walking surfaces is the next level of preventing slip and trips. Recoating or replacing floors, installing mats, pressure-sensitive abrasive strips or abrasive-filled paint-on coating and metal or synthetic decking can further improve safety and reduce the risk of falling. However, it is critical to remember that high-tech flooring requires good housekeeping as much as any other flooring.

### Footwear

In workplaces where floors may be oily or wet or where workers spend considerable time outdoors, prevention of fall accidents should focus on selecting proper footwear. Since there is no footwear with anti-slip properties for every condition, consultation with manufacturers' is highly recommended.

# **SPOT THE HAZARDS - USE YOUR EYES**



## **DON'T LET NEGLIGENCE BE YOUR DEMISE.**

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