



Slips, Trips and Falls -Part 2

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 the feet and the ground or walking surface. This shows that good housekeeping, 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,
- removing obstacles from walkways and always keeping them free of clutter,
- mopping or sweeping debris from floors,
- 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,
- replacing used light bulbs and faulty switches.



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

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 risk of falling. However, it is critical to remember that high-tech flooring requires good housekeeping as much as any other flooring. In addition, resilient, non-slippery 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 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.

Properly fitting footwear increases comfort and prevents fatigue, which, in turn, improves safety for the employee.

What can you do to avoid falling at work?

It is important remembering that safety is everybody business. However, it is employers' responsibility to provide safe work environment for all employees. Employees can improve their own safety too.

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 the 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.