RESOURCES

PRISM Blog - How to Slip and Fall Safely

QUESTIONS

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Slips, Trips, Falls: Prevention and Control Strategies

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What are Slip, Trip, and Fall Hazards

Slip, trip, and fall (STF) hazards remain a leading cause of workplace injuries across all industries, with outcomes ranging from serious and disabling to fatal. In California, a recent study reported about 317,000 annual workplace injuries, with STF incidents accounting for 20–30% (roughly 63,000–95,000). Among public entities, 6–7% of 45 fatal workplace incidents were due to STF hazards. Beyond employee injuries, STF incidents also present significant liability risks. Unsafe walking surfaces can expose organizations to third-party claims, costly litigation, and increased premiums. These figures are concerning, especially given the availability of effective prevention strategies

A slip hazard is any walking or working surface condition that reduces traction and increases the risk of losing footing, such as water, oil, grease, or other contaminants. A trip hazard is any obstruction, uneven surface, or change in elevation that can cause a foot to strike or get caught, leading to loss of balance, including cords, tools, clutter, uneven floors, cracks, potholes, loose or curled carpets, and unmarked steps or thresholds. A fall hazard is any condition that increases the likelihood of losing balance and descending to the same or a lower level, often due to slips or trips or from unprotected edges or improper equipment use, such as openings, improper ladder or stair use, and lack of handrails or guardrails.

When addressing any hazard, best practices align with the components of an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) by integrating hazard identification, employee training, regular inspections, hazard correction, and ongoing communication into daily operations to effectively prevent injuries and illnesses. A strong safety culture supports these efforts by encouraging employees to report hazards without hesitation, holding supervisors accountable for timely correction, and incorporating STF prevention into everyday work practices. Ultimately, best practices can only be effectively implemented and sustained when they are reinforced by a proactive and committed safety culture.

Ultimately, best practices can only be effectively implemented and sustained when they are reinforced by a proactive and committed safety culture. The following best practices outline practical measures that can be incorporated into daily operations to strengthen slip, trip, and fall prevention efforts.

Best Practices for Preventing STF Incidents

Employee Awareness

- STF hazard recognition
- Encourage immediate reporting of unsafe conditions
- Proper footwear
- Pre-planning tasks for pro-active hazard control
- Reinforce safe behaviors regularly

Inspections & Hazard Reporting

- Assign responsibility for STF inspections to specific staff or department
- Schedule frequency of STF inspections in various areas based on level of risk
- Hazards corrected promptly
- Documentation in place

Housekeeping

- Spill kits copntaining sets of materials and tools for cleaning available
- Materials and equipment stored in designated areas
- Secure, stable stacking
- Pre-planning tasks for pro-active hazard control
- Reinforce safe behaviors regularly

Lighting

- Burned-out bulbs and broken fixtures repaired promptly
- Bright lighting in high-risk areas (stairs, ramps, and entrances.exits)
- Motion-activated or automatic lighting in low-traffic or intermittenly used areas
- Adequate outdoor lighting (parking lots, sidewalks, and building perimeters)
- Glare and shadows minimized with appropriate lighting
- Task and lighting provided

Walking & Working Surfaces

- Walkways clearly defined and free of obstructions
- Address cracks, holes, uneven pavement, and damaged flooring promptly
- Slip-resistant flooring in wet or high-traffic areas
- Install mats or non-slip runners at entrances and areas prone to mositure
- Secure mats, rugs, and carpets to prevent curling, bunching, or shifting
- Maintain even transitions between different flooring types
- Ensure proper drainage to prevent standing water or pooling liquids
- Clear access to exits and emergency routes

Signage & Hazard Communication

- Wet floor signs posted when needed
- Temporary hazards clearly marked
- High-visibility, slip-resistant tape/paint used where needed
- Clearly mark changes in elevation such as steps, curbs, or ramps

Work at Height

- Work surfaces at height (ladders, platforms, messanines) are kept clean, dry, and free of tools debris, and materials
- Work at height avoided during adverse weather conditions
- Clear access and egress points to elevated work area

Weather-Related Hazards

- Apply de-icing, sanding, or salting agents where needed
- Prompt removal of snow, ice, and standing water (walkways, entrances, and parking areas)
- Increase frequency of inspections during adverse weather to identify new hazards
- Gutters and downspouts kept clear to prevent overflow onto walking paths
- Limit hazardous work during severe weather conditions

Accident Investigations

- Consistent process for all accidents and near misses
- Document unsafe conditions, behaviors, or system failures causing STF incidents
- Develop long-term preventative measures
- Check effectiveness of preventative measures by re-inspecting after implementation

By prioritizing safety in daily operations and taking a proactive approach to preventing STF injuries, public entities can protect employees, safeguard the public, and reduce costly claims and liabilities. Evaluate existing processes against these best practices to pinpoint opportunities to prevent future STF accidents.

If there are any questions about STF incident prevention, please reach out to PRISM Risk Control.