

# Slip, Trip & Fall Prevention Handbook

This prevention handbook provides you with a basic understanding of what causes a slip, trip or fall and gives you some ideas on what you can do to stop these incidents occurring.

Slips, trips and falls can happen in any workplace. They can occur at the entry of a building, in the kitchen, in cold rooms, on loading docks and even as you walk outside the building. More serious slips or trips together with the resulting falls may result in:

- sprains or strains
- broken bones when trying to break the fall
- a back injury due to the sudden and forceful impact during a fall
- burns if it occurs near hot surfaces or if the person is handling hot fluids
- cuts if it occurs near sharp objects

## Causes of slip, trips and falls

There are various factors that contribute to the risk of slips and trips. Slips usually occur when there is a loss of grip between the shoe and the floor. This commonly occurs when there is a contaminant between the shoe and the floor. Trips occur when a person's foot hits a low obstacle in the person's path, causing a loss of balance. Often, the obstacle is not easily visible or noticed.

The following factors can contribute to the risk of slips and trips. It is usually a combination of these factors that create the risk of a slip or trip.

## Floor Contaminants

Contaminants can be considered as anything that ends up on a floor. Contaminants can be wet such as water, oil or grease, or dry such as dust, metal shavings, plastic bags or off-cuts. Preventing floor contaminants is one of the best things you can do to prevent slips.

## Floor surfaces

Floor surfaces require sufficient grip to prevent slipping, especially in areas which may become wet or contaminated. The greater the thickness or viscosity of the contaminants, the greater the slip resistance of the flooring required to protect against slipping.

## Cleaning

Cleaning affects every workplace and everyone in the workplace. Besides regular cleaning programs, everyone has a role keeping the work area clear and taking responsibility for their own spills. Floors need to be cleaned properly to ensure that:

- contaminants are effectively removed
- a build up of cleaning product residue is avoided

- the floor does not become too slippery
- floors maintain slip resistant properties (of non-slip flooring).

### **Obstacles and other trip hazards**

Trips most often occur because of uneven flooring or cluttered walkways with low obstacles which are not easily visible or noticed. Common examples of low obstacles include trailing cables, uneven edges to flooring, gratings or covers, loose mats or carpet tiles and changes of floor surface level. Trips can be prevented by:

- good housekeeping practices
- ensuring the floor surface is in good order such as being free from holes, uneven surfaces, curled up floor coverings and floor mat edges
- avoiding any changes in floor surface level, or if this is not possible, highlighting these changes providing adequate storage facilities.

### **Environment, including lighting**

Poor lighting and distractions such as unfamiliar or unexpected loud noises, or extreme environmental conditions, such as extreme cold or heat, can impact a person noticing slip or trip hazards in their path. Adequate light levels without glare or shadowing is required to highlight potential slip or trip hazards. Other distractions, like those mentioned, should be minimized as much as possible.

### **People and activity**

Work activities, the way the work is organized and attitudes to safety can affect the worker's ability to see or think about where they are going. For example, people hurrying, carrying large objects, pushing high trolleys or talking on a mobile phone could contribute to the cause of a slip or trip. Workers need to be able to maintain their balance when performing tasks and be able to recover if they slip or trip. For example, when handling loads, workers should have full view of where they need to travel and should also have a free hand to hold onto a rail when walking down steps.

Consideration should be given to:

- individuals physical attributes such as vision, balance and agility
- the work being carried out and how it is organized
- who will be walking through the area, including the public.

### **Footwear**

Footwear plays an important role in reducing the risk of slips, trips and falls. Footwear should be:

- suitable for the type of work and work environment
- comfortable with an adequate non-slip sole and appropriate tread pattern
- checked regularly to ensure treads are not worn away or clogged with contaminants.