

Don't Let Your Safety Record "Slip" Away

Considering the full spectrum of workplace injuries, slip/trip/fall accidents may seem relatively minor—and sometimes they are. But the fact of the matter is that they are a major cause of workplace injuries and deaths. Yet, they are the most preventable type of workplace accidents.

According to Cal/OSHA, slips/trips/falls constitute the majority of nonfatal general industry injuries each year in any accident category. They cause 15 percent of all accidental deaths, and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities.

There are many situations that may cause slips/trips/falls. These include wet and/or icy surfaces, grease, polished floors, loose flooring or carpeting, uneven walking surfaces, clutter, electrical cords, open desk drawers and filing cabinets, and damaged ladder steps.

The controls needed to prevent slip/trip/fall accidents are usually obvious, but too often ignored. Don't let your safety record "slip" away. Here are some slip/trip/fall prevention tips to help prevent these mishaps.

Corridors and Walkways - Corridors and walkways are for walking, not storage of any item. Keep these passageways clear of debris, boxes, and storage at all times.

Extension Cords, Electrical Wiring, and Cables - Rope-like items stretched across the floor act just like the landing wire on an aircraft carrier, but often with crash landings! If extension cords or other wiring need to cross a floor area, covers are available to create a ramp over them. At the least, tape them down, and post an elevated sign on a cone or pole that the hazard is there.

Wet Areas - Any moisture can drastically reduce the slip-resistant qualities of flooring. Spills should be promptly mopped up, and until the floor is dry, a sign should warn of wet flooring. During wet rainy months, be sure to place mats near doors. And to be sure floor and outdoor drains are clear of debris so they can do their jobs.

Dust or Dirt - Though dry, dust and dirt can often times be slippery and should be swept up often.

Stairs - Be sure to hold the handrails when using the stairs. At the very least, you should never walk stairs with your hands in your pockets or while reading materials.

Safe Walking - Even if all the above are carried out, you still have to follow the old maxim, "Watch your step." This is especially true if carrying a load, which reduces balance and can block visibility. Slow your pace on wet surfaces, and test your grip on ramps before proceeding. And beware of distractions. Most of us can walk and chew gum at the same time, but some fail (and fall) when gum chewing is replaced by an excited conversation on a cell phone.

When we share the responsibility for safety in the workplace, everyone wins!!