



SAFETY CORNER



SAFETY DISCUSSION

PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Slip, trip, and fall incidents are one of the leading causes of injury in the construction workplace. While the most catastrophic of these occur when working from heights, many injuries also happen at the ground level. Many accidents occur when walking across uneven ground that is too soft, too hard, wet, or muddy.

The most common injuries are back injuries, twisted ankles, and knee strains. However, depending on how a person falls, so are fractured wrists and muscle tears. Preventing slips and falls is a concern that should be addressed by every employer and an important issue for workers, visitors, and the public.

Risk Areas and Regular Maintenance

Regular maintenance with safety in mind is required so that working surfaces are maintained free of slip, trip, and fall hazards that may result in injury to workers.

- **Walkways.** Seasonal changes in temperature, along with regular wear and tear, can deteriorate the condition of outdoor walkways, so these areas should be inspected regularly to identify the ruts,



slippery conditions, and other uneven ground on the worksite. Also, identify holes and trenches on the site. Cover them and rope them off with caution tape to prevent access to the area. Workers should not take shortcuts through debris piles.

- **Floors.** Floors should be kept clean and free of water, oil, and grease. Tiled or concrete floors can be etched to provide a nonslip, nonskid surface. Smooth flooring also can be covered with skid-resistant materials to improve traction.
- **Stairwells and steps.** Steps should not be dangerously steep and should have the same rise and depth with visible edges. Keep stairs and stairwells free of grease, ice, snow, boxes, and other obstacles that could cause slips or trips.

Seasonal Safety Hazards

Walkways, ladders, and work platforms present seasonal slip-and-fall hazards due to snow, ice, and rain. It's important to evaluate your equipment and employee needs before each new season begins. For example, devise a team of volunteers or employees to handle snow and ice removal emergencies, and stock up on salt and shovels before the winter season.



- **Snow and ice.** Clear snow and ice from emergency exits, outdoor staircases, walkways, and parking lots as soon as possible. Evaluate downspouts to ensure runoff does not form ice buildup on sidewalks or parking areas.
- **Rain.** Keep floors dry and alert people to potentially slippery surfaces in the event of rain. Entryways and hallways become slippery when wet, but also consider potentially dangerous outdoor areas, such as ramps. Preplanning and vigilance can help prevent a majority of slips and falls.

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