



Slips, Trips, and Falls

Overview

OSHA does not have specific regulations for training workers to avoid slips, trips, and falls. However, the cost of such injuries, not only from loss of worker time but also in OSHA and insurance company investigations, makes it clear it is in your company's best interest to have a strong and regular training program for all employees. Using this text regularly for new employees, employees whose job duties change, and for retraining will help to meet these needs.

Physical forces in a slip, trip, or fall

Look at the physical forces in a slip, trip, or fall. Those factors are:

1. Friction – The resistance between things, such as between your footwear and the walking surface.
2. Momentum – Speed and size make up the scientific measure of momentum. In terms of the workplace, it means that large items moving at higher speeds will fall harder than the same item moving at a slower speed.
3. Gravity – Obviously, this is the force that pulls you to the ground when you fall. The key point here is to keep your balance so you don't fall.

Preventing injuries from slips

Although engineering controls, such as gritty coatings on floors or step surfaces, are implemented to reduce the threat of slips, trips, and falls, the right footwear can also play an important role.

One of the best ways to help prevent slip, trip, and fall injuries is to increase friction between workers' shoes and the surfaces they walk on. The material that the sole of the shoe is made from will provide varying amounts of traction, depending on the type of floor. For instance, shoes with neoprene soles can be used safely on most wet or dry work surfaces. However, they are not recommended for oily conditions.

Why trips happen

A trip occurs when a worker's foot hits an object, and his or her balance is thrown off. This creates enough momentum for the worker to fall. Trips happen when a work area is cluttered, when lighting is poor, or when an area has loose footing.

You can avoid trips by:

1. making sure you can see over the load you are carrying,
2. ensuring lighting is adequate,
3. keeping work areas free of clutter and litter, keeping furniture out of walkways and other traffic areas, and
4. taping down extension cords or keeping them out of walkways.



Why falls occur

Falls occur whenever a person moves too far away from his or her center of balance. Slips and trips often push workers off their center of balance far enough to cause a fall, but there are many other ways to fall. Makeshift ladders, misuse of ladders, accidents while climbing, and improper scaffolding use also cause falls.

Most falls are from slips or trips at ground level, but falls from greater heights pose a much greater risk of serious injury. Avoid falls of any kind by following these safety measures:

- Make sure hallways, stairs, and work areas are properly lit.
- Repair or report stairs or handrails that are loose or broken.
- Don't use stairs or aisles as storage areas.
- Wear shoes appropriate for the job, perhaps flat shoes with nonskid soles.

The hazards of stairs

Other areas that present a risk of falls for workers are stairs. Loss of traction causes many stairway slip and fall accidents, usually due to water or other liquid on the steps. Because stairs are so common, it's easy to forget that they can be hazardous. Tell workers they can prevent injury on stairs by:

- Using handrails whenever possible.
- Only carrying loads that they can see over.
- Reporting unsafe conditions promptly, including broken stair treads, floorboards, or handrails.

Training tips

A tour of the facility would allow you to point out the areas that might prove unsafe as far as slips, trips, and falls are concerned and may bring to mind questions participants have as they move through the plant.



Sample safety meeting agenda

1. Accidents, injuries, near-misses, discuss:

- Incidents that have occurred in your company since the last meeting.
- Any follow-up that has been done as a result of investigations into incidents.
- Incidents that have happened in other companies.
- Updates to the company's Accident Prevention Plan from "lessons learned."

2. Results of safety inspections

- Discuss the results of recent safety inspections.
- Follow up on assignments for eliminating or controlling identified hazards.
- Encourage employees to identify any unsafe conditions or tasks.
- Discuss ways to eliminate or control the hazards.
- When appropriate, assign responsibilities for eliminating or controlling identified hazards.

3. Training

- Discuss any new safe work procedures or other policies and procedures that need to be implemented.
- Safety Topic of the Month: a presentation and discussion on the chosen topic.

4. Open forum

- Any one who has a concern about safety and health should bring it up for discussion.

5. Next meeting

- Set the time, date, and place for the next meeting.
- Select a Safety Topic and designate the presenter/discussion leader.



