



Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls

I. Why is slipping, tripping and falling a problem at work?

Each year nearly 3000 Maine workers lose work time because of injuries from slipping, tripping or falling --- almost 20% of all serious injuries to workers. That's bad for business and even worse for the workers who are hurt.

Poor housekeeping is a major reason workers slip, trip, or fall at work. Some people think housekeeping is a waste of time, or something you only do at home. But just a few minutes a day picking up tools and litter can prevent an injury that could keep you or a co-worker off the job for days or months.

Housekeeping is everyone's job --- every worker, every supervisor --- no matter what work you do. Good housekeeping not only prevents injuries -- it can save time and keep tools from being lost or damaged.

Slippery surfaces also cause workers to slip and fall. Floors may be slippery from spills of oil, grease, water or other liquids. Rain, snow or ice can make walkways, stairs, loading docks and parking lots slippery.

Workers may also get injured falling from **ladders or scaffolding**. Using a ladder isn't just common sense. You need training on the right way to set up and work on ladders or scaffolds.

II. What causes workers to slip, trip or fall?

Many situations can cause a slip, trip or fall. Here are some of them:

- ice, wet spots, grease, polished floors
- loose flooring or carpeting
- uneven walking surfaces
- clutter
- electrical cords
- open desk drawers and filing cabinets
- damaged or improperly set up ladders

"I caught my foot on a power cord sticking out from a desk. I stopped myself from falling and started to walk away. Then I remembered that someone else might not be so lucky, so I made sure the cords were secure under the desk."

III. What can you do to prevent slips, trips, and falls?

- If you see a mess or things lying around, take care of it. Put tools somewhere safe, but visible. Don't wait for someone else to do it.
- Keep walkways and stairs clear of scrap and debris.
- Keep storage areas and walkways free of holes, ruts and obstructions.
- Clean up spills of grease, oil or other liquids at once. If that's not possible, cover them with sand or other absorbent material until they can be cleaned up. Put a barrier or marker over the spill.
- Coil up extension cords, lines, hoses, etc. when not in use.
- Keep electrical and other wires out of the way.
- Close file cabinets and desk drawers when not in use.
- Make sure there's adequate lighting inside and outside.
- Wear lug soles in icy weather.
- Learn the proper way to set up and use ladders and scaffolds.
- Clear parking lots, stairs and walkways in snowy weather. Put down salt/sand as needed.
- Report icy walkways and any other hazards that can't be corrected immediately. For example, loose flooring or carpeting.

For more information about this or other workplace safety and health topics, contact
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