



TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

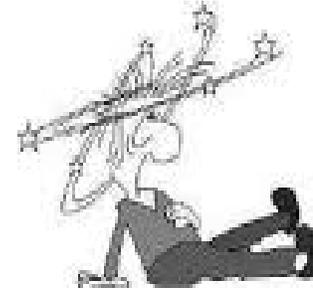
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SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

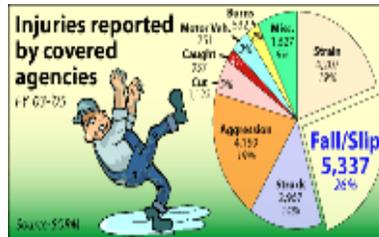


OK, so how many times have you fallen or tripped over your own feet and turned around to make sure no one was looking? Go ahead and tell it, we have all done it. Have you ever stumbled over nothing and turned around to see what you stumbled on, just to see nothing? You just shake

your head, laugh and hope no one saw you and continue to walk on, wondering how did I do that. Did you know that according to the U.S. Department of labor, slips, trips, and falls constitutes the majority of general industry mishaps. This particular category of mishaps causes **15 percent** of all accidental deaths and is second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities.



The average person takes 18,000 steps every day, but how many of these steps are



taken seriously. There are over 13 million slip, trip, and fall injuries every year that result in lost workdays, broken bones, "bad backs," even permanent disability and death. By understanding how slips, trips, and falls happen, you can prevent painful injuries both on and off the job.

Slips

Slips are a loss of balance caused by too little friction between your feet and the surface you work or walk on. Slips can be caused by constantly wet surfaces, occasional spills, or weather

hazards such as ice or snow. Walking carelessly, ignoring occasional spills, and wearing shoes without adequate traction for the surface can cause painful slip injuries both at work and home.



Trips

Trips are a loss of balance caused by an interference between your forward motion and some object. (You can also trip walking or running backwards) Taking short cuts, leaving clutter in walkways, working under poor lighting, and walking on loose, uneven surfaces are common cause of trips. Trips are as likely to occur from these hazards at



home as well as on the job.

Falls

Falls are caused whenever you move too far from your center of balance. Think of it this way: when you fall, gravity pulls you from one unstable position to a second, more stable position. Makeshift ladders, reaching too far up or to the side while on a ladder, and ladders set up on loose, uneven ground are common fall hazards. A slip or trip, as well often ends in a painful fall.



Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is paramount. If good housekeeping practices are not enforced, other administrative control measures implemented will never be fully effective. It is often been said that safety and housekeeping go hand in hand. This is extremely true, especially when addressing the serious issue of slips trips, and falls. If your department's housekeeping habits are poor, the result may well be employee injuries, resulting in ever increasing insurance cost. If your department's are noticeably clean and well organ-

ized, it is a good indication that its overall safety program is effective as well. In addition to safety, disorderly work environment can negatively impact the morale of the employees who must function in a job site that is dirty, hazardous, and poorly managed.



Obviously housekeeping is not the "minor" issue many people suppose it to be.

According to the National Safety Council, workers are injured from slips, trips and falls more than any other occupational injury. These often can be avoided if proper housekeeping procedures are used. It is not uncommon for a worker to trip on a piece of equipment or tool that they themselves forgot to put away.

Remember the saying:

"Having a place for everything and putting everything in its place"

Proper housekeeping is a routine. It is an ongoing procedure that is simply done as a part of each worker's daily performance.

When each individual does his/her part to keep work areas clean, then a successful house-

keeping program will be the result.

Wet or Slippery Surfaces

Slips and trips on walking surfaces are a significant portion of injuries reported by covered state agencies. The specific types of surfaces involved in these injuries vary considerably, but some of the more frequently reported are:

- Parking lots
- Sidewalks (or lack of)
- Food preparation areas and shower stalls
- Floors in general

Traction on outdoor surfaces can change drastically when subjected to environmental factors such as rain or sleet or on indoor surfaces when moisture is tracked in by pedestrian traffic. Some administrative controls that can be implemented outdoors include the following:

- Keep area, such as the parking lots and sidewalks, clean and in good repair condition.
- If snow or ice are a factor, additional controls can be implemented to either remove the snow where feasible or, in case of ice, to treat the surface with sand or other environmentally friendly material.
- If surfaces are sloped, an additional precaution may be to temporarily suspend use of the area.

Use adhesive striping material or anti-skid paint wherever possible.



Control measures that can be implemented indoors to prevent, or minimize as much as possible, injuries caused by wet surfaces include the following:

- Anti-skid adhesive tape is an excellent and economically feasible fix to combat slips or trips.
- During inclement weather conditions, moisture-absorbent mats should be placed in entrance areas. **Caution;** improper mats can become tripping hazards themselves. Floor mats should have beveled edges, lie flat on the floor, and be made out of material or contain a backing that will not slide on the floor.
- Have readily available and display wet floor signs. An additional caution: A wet floor sign is a valuable tool to attract attention, but should not in of itself be the sole control technique. It is also important that once the hazard is removed the sign is also removed. Otherwise,



they become commonplace and lose their intended effectiveness.

Obstacles in walkways

Injuries can also result from trips caused by reasons other than slippery surfaces, namely inadvertent contact with obstacles or other types of material (debris) and/or equipment. For example, obstacles could include obstructions across hallways, material stacked or dumped in passageways, clutter, and the list can go on. Of course proper housekeeping in work and walking areas is still the most effective control measure in avoiding these types of hazards. Keep aisles and corridors clean, clear, and in good repair to the maximum extent possible. This is especially true in office environments where there is a common tendency to store or stack material, especially boxes, in hallways and corridors. Not only is this an unsafe practice conducive to tripping hazards but also a source of fuel in the event of a fire. The following are some control measures that can be implemented :

- Insist on good housekeeping and keep all work ar-

reas, passageways, store-rooms, and service areas clean and orderly.

- Where mechanical handling devices are used, such as storage areas or warehouse, allow sufficient clearance for maneuvering of the equipment.
- In highly congested or trafficked areas provide separate and marked permanent aisles and passageways for both equipment and pedestrian traffic.
- Avoid stringing cords or lines across hallways or in any walkway.
- In the office environment, emphasize caution on where people leave carrying items such as briefcases boxes, etc.
- Encourage safe work practices such as closing file cabinet drawers after use and picking up and stowing loose items from the floor.
- Maintain constant vigilance for slip and trip hazards through periodic inspections.



Lighting

Inadequate lighting can hide items that are in your way, so

replace light fixtures or bulbs that don't work. Keep work areas well lit and clean. When you enter a darkened room, always turn on the light first, even if you stay only for a minute. Store items a safe distance from light bulbs. Once you have completed your task, turn the light off. Towels and paper can catch fire from bulbs that's been left on. Proper lighting will ensure that employees detect obstructions.

Use proper illumination in walkways, staircases, hallways to help people avoid slips, trips, and falls. Burning a 100-watt bulb in a lamp designed for 60 watts is a fire hazard. Most lamps have wattage instructions written along the socket.



Footwear

Falls can be prevented. All we have to do is follow one simple rule: watch where we are going. Walking is such a common activity that most of us pay little attention to potential hazards. The shoes we wear can play a big part in



preventing falls. The slickness of the soles and the type of heels worn need to be evaluated to avoid slips, trips, and falls. Whenever a fall-related injury is investigated, one of the items investigated is the footwear to see if it contributed to the incident. Always wear the proper footwear associated with the task in hand.



Individual Behavior

Do people normally get hurt because they have a flagrant disregard for safety regulations and procedures? Studies have shown that this normally isn't the case. In most instances it isn't a person's indifference to proper procedures and precautions that result in injury. The actual cause frequently turns out to be a brief moment of inattention that ends in disaster. Inattention can be identified as the root cause of the injury in almost every category of accident analysis (traffic mishaps, power tool injuries and etc.). Within the realm of slips, trips, and falls, inattention can lead to a variety of regrettable events ranging from simple bruised shins to extremely serious conse-



quences such as concussions or even death. How many times have we heard the phrase, "I guess I just wasn't thinking" during an accident investigation? Something has taken a person's focus away from his/her task to a "mental playground". A person's state of mind is his/her own personal property and, of course can't be controlled, so therefore the supervisors must frequently emphasize to keep the focus on the workplace. Remember, you can be extremely careful for years, and still get hurt during two seconds of inattention, distraction, or hurrying to get the job done. Instruction, training, and constant reminders can only go so far. It is ultimately up to each individual to plan, stay alert, and pay attention.



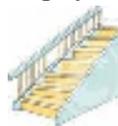
Fall from a Different Level

Injuries from falls reported by covered state agencies cover the entire spectrum; however, interesting to note, a majority of these occur from walking on working surfaces that are not necessarily of any significant height. For example, a number of injuries have been reported by these agencies in the suburbs from incidents involving stepping off the edge

of a curb or sidewalk to stepping into animal holes. As we have seen, falls are the second lead-



ing cause of accidental deaths in the United States. Of these fatal falls, statistics show that nearly half occur on steps and stairways and other areas. Steps and stairways can be found in various dimensions and numerous locations. Stairways are constructed out of many common building materials (metal, wood, concrete, etc.) and used to permit transit from one level or floor to another in applications too numerous to detail in this training packet. Naturally, to prevent a stairway fall, awareness and prevention remain the key. Before setting foot on a stairway, the following preventative measures should be physically in place and consciously in your mind.



- Whether going up or down stairs, always use the handrail.
- Seeing where you are going is important. Make sure the stairs are well lit with on/off switches at the top and bottom of the stairs
- Make sure the stairs are clear and free of all obstacles.
- Never use a stairway for temporary storage.

- Routinely check the stairs for worn or loose carpeting and immediately make any necessary repairs. If the steps have a smooth surface, install anti-slip tread to provide traction for secure footing.
- Make sure that the edge of each stair is noticeable. If the stairs are carpeted with a material that has a busy pattern, the edge of the stair may not be obvious.
- To avoid confusing the bottom basement step with the floor (a very common occurrence), paint it white to make it more visible.
- Take extra care when ascending/descending steps while wearing footwear such as high heels, sandals, slippers, athletic shoes, or socks.
- Avoid carrying vision-blocking loads. Don't carry so much up or down stairs that you can't see where you are stepping. Also, keep one hand free to hold onto the handrail. If necessary, make several trips with smaller loads.
- If throw rugs must be positioned at the top or bottom of a stairway, make sure they are securely fastened with skid-resistant backing



and carpet tape.

- Be on guard for single steps when entering or exiting a room. Sudden level changes can be hazardous. Highlight these single steps whenever possible.

Now that you know about slip trips, and falls **don't** be added to the U. S. Department of Labor statics.

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