

# Safety Circular

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## Slips, Trips, and Falls Prevention

Have you ever thought about how much it cost companies for employee slips, trips, and falls? Annually, slips and trips (without a fall), and falls on the same level cost employers **\$11 billion**. Slip and Fall injuries cost businesses approximately **\$70 billion**. Slips-and-falls also attribute to the leading cause of death in the workplace and for causing **20%** of all disabling workplace injuries.

### Dangerous Hazards

While they may not seem like a leading cause of injury, **slips, trips and falls** are among the most dangerous hazards we face on the job. Slips and falls are the leading cause of workers' compensation claims and are the leading cause of occupational injury.

Slips, trips and falls can result in injuries with lasting effects and even death. It is important to understand how slips, trips and falls happen and how to identify hazards, how to eliminate or minimize the hazards and how to report it.

### IMPACT OF SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS



Imagine 70 Billion different ways  
employers could invest in employees

### Know the Difference

**Slips** happen because of a lack of friction or traction between a person's footwear and the walking surface. Common causes of slips in the workplace are:

- Spills
- Weather Hazards (puddles and ice buildup)
- Surfaces that are wet or oily
- Loose rugs or mats

**Trips** occur when your foot strikes or hits an object, which causes a person to lose their balance. Common causes of trips in the workplace are:

- Obstructions and clutter on the floor
- Poor lighting (e.g. power cords, boxes, open drawers, and mattresses)
- Uneven or irregular walking surfaces
- Wrinkled or curled up mats

**Falls** can result from a slip or a trip when a person's center of gravity is shifted and balance is lost. Falls in the workplace are:

- Obstructed view (e.g. carrying large items)
- Not paying attention to the surroundings
- Not using appropriate equipment (e.g standing on a chair, table, or other surface with wheels—use a ladder)

## Maintain Good Housekeeping

Injuries can also result from trips caused by situations other than slippery surfaces, namely inadvertent contact with obstacles or other types of material (debris) and/or equipment.

Proper housekeeping in work and walking areas are still the most effective control measure in avoiding these types of hazards. The following are some additional control measures that can be implemented:

- Where mechanical handling devices are used, such as storage areas or warehouses, allow sufficient clearance for maneuvering of the equipment.
- Avoid stringing cords or lines across hallways or walkways.
- In an office environment, emphasize caution in areas where people leave carrying items such as chemicals, boxes, etc.
- Encourage safe work practices such as closing file cabinet drawers after use and picking up loose items from the floor.
- Clean up spills immediately.

## Use A Warning Sign



When an indoor or outdoor slip, trip or fall hazard is apparent, employees should be empowered to take immediate corrective action such as the placement of warning signs or caution tape and clean up spills that do not contain potentially hazardous materials. If immediate action is not feasible, the hazard should be reported to the Maintenance Department, Unit Risk Manager, or Collateral Duty Safety Officer (CDSO).

## Prevent A Stairway Fall

Falls are the second leading cause of accidental deaths in the United States. Of these fatal falls, statistics show that nearly half occur on steps and stairways.

Before setting foot on a stairway, the following preventative measures should be physically in place, and consciously on your mind.

- Always use the handrail when going up or down stairs.
- Make sure the stairs are clear and free of all obstacles. Never use a stairway for temporary storage.
- 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, keeping one hand free to hold onto the handrail. If necessary, make several trips with smaller loads.
- Be on guard for single steps when entering or exiting a room.
- Report damaged stairways, (steps, and handrails) to maintenance immediately.



## Increase Situational Awareness

In the workplace, **situational awareness** refers to an individual's ability to recognize and understand the various elements, events, and dynamics of their work environment, especially those that could impact safety and performance. It encompasses an awareness of potential hazards, an understanding of how these hazards might interact or change over time, and the ability to make informed decisions to mitigate risks or respond appropriately to unforeseen events.

## Responding to an Emergency

Maintaining personal safety while responding during an emergency is imperative to prevent injuries or death.

- Put your personal safety first
- Know your surroundings be aware of warning signs
- Make sure the scene is safe
- Use handrails; ascending and descending stairs
- Never run up or down stairways
- Use each step, don't skip a step
- Keep passageways and aisles clear of clutter and keep well lit
- Wear appropriate non-slip soles
- Avoid standing water, ice and uneven surfaces
- Know your physical limitations

**SAFETY FIRST**



**Safety Starts Here**  
Think Safe...  
Work Safe...  
Be Safe

## When Walking Employees Should

- Wear non-slip shoes or work boots.
- Proceed at a reasonable pace and avoid distractions.
- Use handrails when going up or down stairs and not skip steps.
- Use a flashlight in dimly lit or dark areas.
- Use extra caution when walking from one surface to another or when the walking surface is uneven, wet or icy (ice buildup).
- Hold small loads close to your body and not carry anything that is too large or bulky to see over or around.
- Report damaged walkways and uneven surfaces to maintenance immediately.



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The Safety Circular, a publication of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Risk Management Department, is published monthly in an effort to promote and enhance risk management awareness on issues relating to TDCJ employees. Comments, suggestions and safety related items are welcome.

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References: ♦ Fact Sheet: "Preventing Work-related Slips, trips and Falls" ♦ Safety First: How to avoid Slips, Trips and Falls" ♦ Situational Awareness in the workplace [hseblog.com](http://hseblog.com)

