



Slips, Trips and Falls Fact Sheet

What causes slips, trips and falls?

Slips can occur when floors or other working surfaces become slippery due to wet or oily processes, floor cleaning, leaks, or from materials and debris left in walkways. Trips can occur due to uneven floor or working surfaces, protruding nails and boards, from stretched carpet or bunched floor mats intended to prevent slipping, from holes or depressions in working surfaces, and from step-risers on stairs that are not uniform in height. Both slips and trips can result in falls. In addition, falls can occur when ladders are not maintained properly, and when stairways and elevated working surfaces are not designed properly.

What types of injuries can occur?

According to OSHA, slips, trips and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents and result in back injuries, strains and sprains, contusions, and fractures. Additionally, they cause 15 percent of all accidental deaths and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities.

What can employers and employees do to prevent slips, trips and falls in the workplace?

- Where there are wet or oily processes, maintain drainage and provide false floors, platforms, nonslip mats or floor surfaces, or other dry standing places where practicable.
- Use no-skid waxes and surfaces coated with grit to create nonslip surfaces in slippery areas such as toilet and shower areas.
- Use slip-resistant footwear.
- Clean up floors and working surfaces promptly and frequently when they become wet.
- Use prudent housekeeping procedures such as cleaning only one side of a passageway at a time.
- Provide warning signs for wet floor areas.
- Provide floor plugs for equipment, so power cords need not run across pathways. Temporary electrical cords that must cross aisles should be taped or anchored to the floor.
- Aisles and passageways should be sufficiently wide for easy movement and should be kept clear at all times.

- Re-lay or stretch carpets that bulge or have become bunched to prevent tripping hazards.
- Eliminate cluttered or obstructed work areas and keep file cabinet drawers closed.
- Provide good lighting for all halls and stairwells, especially during night hours.
- Make sure stairs have proper handrails, that treads and risers are maintained, and that treads have a slip-resistant surface.
- Instruct workers to use the handrail on stairs, to avoid undue speed, and to maintain an unobstructed view of the stairs ahead of them even if that means requesting help to manage a bulky load.
- Eliminate uneven floor surfaces.
- Make sure elevated storage and work surfaces have guardrails, toe boards and a permanent means of access.
- Make sure that floor drains, pits and other floor opening are covered or protected with guardrails.
- Use only properly maintained ladders with uniformly spaced rungs and nonslip safety feet to reach items. Do not use stools, chairs or boxes as substitutes for ladders.
- Train employees in the safe use of ladders.

Are there NCDOL standards for slips, trips and falls?

NCDOL requirements for the prevention of slips, trips and falls are contained in **29 CFR 1910, Subpart D, Walking-Working Surfaces**.

Where can I find additional information?

The NCDOL Library has **Fall Prevention videos** (link to <http://www.nclabor.com/lib/libaud.htm>) available in the "Falls" heading under video/DVD titles. See NCDOL OSH Industry Guide # 41 [A Guide to OSHA for Small Businesses in North Carolina](#), which contains checklists related to walking and working surfaces as well as other information. Also, see the **Walking and Working Surfaces Index page** (link to: <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/walkingworkingsurfaces/index.html>) on the OSHA Web site.