



PREVENTING INJURIES FROM SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

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A slapstick comedian slips on a banana peel and everyone laughs. A schoolboy stumbles and the kid behind him cracks, "have a good trip?" But slips and falls in the workplace are no laughing matter, whether to the victim of the fall or to their employer. Slip and fall injuries are the third leading cause of disabling work injuries in the United States and are the most common type of office injury. The back is most frequently injured in falls, usually resulting in sprains and strains.

And there's a financial implication as well. Slips, trips and falls account for approximately 15-20% of all workers' compensation costs!

COMMON SENSE PREVENTION

Luckily, through some simple modifications and safety precautions, there are ways to minimize the risk of these injuries to your company's employees.

Walkways should be kept clear of debris, and work areas well-lit so obstacles can be seen.

To help avoid loss of traction, keep floors and walkways clear of water, ice and slippery materials, and require slip resistant shoes for people who work in potentially wet or greasy conditions or move rapidly from one type of walking surface to another. For those who work in icy conditions, consider studded rubber pullovers for shoes and boots.

Educate yourself and your employees on these pointers to improve safety when walking on slippery surfaces:

- Take small steps, shorter than your foot length, to keep your center of balance under you
- Walk with your toes pointed outward, which provides a wider, more stable base of support for maintaining balance
- Keep both hands free for balance, rather than in your pockets

Advice on the art of falling...

Yes, there is a 'right' way to fall to minimize injuries. Consider these pointers:

- Roll with the fall: try to twist and roll backward onto the soft tissues of your buttocks, thigh and large back muscles rather than falling forward
- Turn quickly to look at the spot where your body will hit the ground
- Relax as much as possible when you begin to fall

A reputable group of occupational medicine specialists can help to evaluate your workplace for potential hazards. Look for a provider who will offer site visits and consultations to find and fix any problem areas before they cause a major accident.

References

- Supervisors' Safety Update #97-03, *Prevent Slip, Trip and Fall Injuries*, by Jeannette Jacobson
- *Preventing Injuries from Slips, Trips and Falls*, by William J. Becker.

TriHealth Occupational Medicine partners with employers in keeping their employees healthy, safe, and on the job.

For more information, [contact us](#).