

## Slips, trips and falls: BUSTED!

Written by Sheq Management

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Slips, trips and falls CAN be prevented! Just follow this advice from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Statistics show that the majority (66 percent) of falls happen on the same level resulting from slips and trips. The remaining 34 percent are falls from a height.

Slips happen where there is too little friction or traction between the footwear and the walking surface.

Common causes of slips are:

- wet or oily surfaces;
- occasional spills;
- weather hazards;
- loose, unanchored rugs or mats; and
- flooring or other walking surfaces that do not have same degree of traction in all areas.

Trips happen when your foot collides with (strikes, hits) an object causing you to lose the

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balance and, eventually, fall.

Common causes of tripping are:

- obstructed view;
- poor lighting;
- clutter in your way;
- wrinkled carpeting;
- uncovered cables;
- bottom drawers not being closed; and
- uneven steps, thresholds, or walking surfaces.

### **So, how do you prevent falls due to slips and trips?**

Both slips and trips result from some kind of unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet and the ground or walking surface. This shows that good housekeeping, quality of walking surfaces (flooring), selection of proper footwear, and appropriate pace of walking are critical for preventing fall accidents.

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### **Housekeeping**

Good housekeeping is the first and the most important (fundamental) level of preventing falls due to slips and trips.

It includes:

- cleaning all spills immediately;
- marking spills and wet areas;
- mopping or sweeping debris from floors;
- removing obstacles from walkways and always keeping them free of clutter;
- tacking and taping of mats, rugs and carpets that do not lay flat;
- always closing file cabinet or storage drawers;
- covering cables that cross walkways;
- keeping working areas and walkways well lit; and
- replacing used light bulbs and faulty switches.

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Without good housekeeping practices, any other preventive measures, such as installation of sophisticated flooring, specialty footwear or training on techniques of walking and safe falling, will never be fully effective.

### **Flooring**

Changing or modifying walking surfaces is the next level of preventing slip and trips. Recoating or replacing floors, installing mats, pressure-sensitive abrasive strips or abrasive-filled paint-on coating and metal or synthetic decking can further improve safety and reduce risk of falling.

However, it is critical to remember that high-tech flooring requires good housekeeping as much as any other flooring. In addition, resilient, non-slippery flooring prevents or reduces foot fatigue and contributes to slip prevention measures.

### **Footwear**

In workplaces where floors may be oily or wet, or where workers spend considerable time outdoors, prevention of fall accidents should focus on selecting proper footwear. Since there is no footwear with anti-slip properties for every condition, consultation with manufacturers is highly recommended.

Properly fitting footwear increases comfort and prevents fatigue which, in turn, improves safety for the employee.