

FACT SHEET

PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

- INFORMATION FOR WORKERS

While the employer has primary responsibilities for workplace safety, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* requires workers to co-operate with their employer's efforts to meet safety obligations and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of other people in the workplace.

Slips, trips and falls on the same level are common incidents at work and can cause serious injury or death. You can take some easy steps to reduce the risk of an incident.

These steps are:

1. Find the problem or hazard
2. Check it out
3. Fix it
4. Look at it again

STEP 1. FIND THE PROBLEMS (IDENTIFY)

Identifying hazards and working together to fix them is everyone's responsibility. Use the OHS consultation arrangements set up in your workplace and refer to the *WorkCover Code of Practice – OHS Consultation 2001* (Catalogue No. 964.1) for further advice.

All workers can identify hazards. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Is my work area wet, slippery or cluttered?
- Do I need to move suddenly on slippery floors?
- How do I access high areas?
- Are the floors in my workplace wet or oily?
- Are there untidy work areas, cluttered aisles or passageways where I work?
- Are there steep or slippery steps, stairs, ramps or ladders where I work?
- Are there poorly lit work areas and walk ways where I work?
- Are there unguarded edges and unguarded openings?
- Do I work at an inappropriate pace?
- Does my workplace layout make a slip, trip or fall hazard?
- Do my work procedures make a slip, trip or fall hazard?

All the hazards you have found can contribute to a slip, trip and a fall on the same level. Report and discuss all hazards with your supervisor. Follow your organisation's safety procedures when hazards are identified.

STEP 2. CHECK IT OUT (ASSESS)

The next step is to identify the causes of the hazard. Sometimes there will be a single and obvious cause but often it will be a combination of causes contributing to the problem. Some of these causes may not be obvious. For example, a person tripping in the hall could identify poor lighting ('I couldn't see the step'), as well as feeling that they needed to rush to keep up with job demands.

Next determine the likelihood of an incident occurring and the level of harm that could result from the hazards identified in Step 1. This should be done with your supervisor and in accordance with your organisation's safety procedures. Ask questions such as:

- Is the problem in a busy area, near moving machinery/equipment or not likely to be seen?
- How soon does the hazard need to be fixed? If the hazard is posing an immediate problem such as an oil spill on the floor in a busy area, it is important to fix it immediately.

Consider the risk to visitors, contractors, customers or other people coming into your workplace. They may not be as aware of the risks as you are.

STEP 3. FIX IT (ELIMINATE OR CONTROL IT)

On some occasions you can take action to immediately control the problem. For example, if you come across a spill, you can wipe it up or otherwise deal with it in accordance with your workplace safety procedures. However, if this is a recurring problem, management should identify what is causing it and rectify it. For a list of common problems, see the checklist overleaf.

STEP 4. LOOK AT IT AGAIN (REVIEW)

Has the problem been fixed? Do regular checks to make sure that problems don't recur.

CHECKLIST FOR SOME COMMON PROBLEMS

While the following problems happen frequently, be on the lookout for other hazards in your workplace. Report and discuss problems with your supervisor. Follow your organisation's safety procedures when dealing with them. Where problems recur, they must be identified and fixed by the employer or person in control of the premises.

PROBLEM	EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN
Spillage of wet or dry substances	Know your workplace procedures for cleaning up spills. Where it is appropriate, clean up spills as soon as possible. If the area is still wet after the cleaning process, use warning signs or provide alternative access.
Floor coverings	Identify problems with the condition and placement of the mats/rugs, and method of securing them to the floor.
Floor cleaning	People can slip on wet floors or trip over electrical cords. Avoid wet mopping, vacuuming or using a floor polisher during busy times. Clean floors in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
Unguarded floor openings	Report any openings in the floor that are not protected by barriers or guards.
Type of footwear	Wear the most appropriate footwear for the job and work environment. Refer to your workplace policy on appropriate footwear.
Wet or dirty footwear, or wet clothing	Before entering a building, wipe your shoes on available mats and shake off wet clothing or umbrellas. Use storage where wet items can be placed, such as bins for wet umbrellas.
Poor lighting	Report to your supervisor any lighting that is inadequate to see the floor or any obstacles.
Untidy areas	Keep your workplace tidy, keep walkways clear and make sure cords and cables are out of the way. Make sure objects don't create a trip hazard.
Rubbish	Ensure paper, food, packaging, and other rubbish is removed and that bins don't overflow.
Stairs	Report any damaged steps, treads or handrails. Don't use stairways for storage.
Ramps	If ramps are too steep or slippery, report the problem.
Outdoors surfaces	Be aware of problems in outdoors areas such as wet or uneven surfaces, potholes, rocks, rubble and other obstacles. Take appropriate action to address the problem such as arranging maintenance, repairing damaged surfaces or using cleaning agents.
Carrying items and moving loads	Carry items so that you can clearly see where you have to go. Don't carry loads that are too heavy. Make sure there are no protruding items likely to cause a problem, such as dangling cords. Use mechanical aids or team lifting where appropriate.
Excessive workloads	Avoid running and rushing around. Report workload problems to your supervisor
Ladders	Use ladders in accordance with the manufacturer's information on safe use. Report damaged ladders to your supervisor.

For more detailed information on slips, trips and falls on the same level, please refer to :
Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls – Guide 2006 WorkCover Publication No. 1401

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