



# TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

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## Slips, Trips and Falls



### **PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE:**

### **SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS**

Most of us are very experienced walkers. After all, we've been walking almost all of our lives. So why is it that simply putting one foot in front of the other to get from place to place results in so many injuries? After all, slips, trips, and falls are a major cause of injuries, both at work and away from work.

- According to OSHA, they cause 15% of all accidental deaths, second only to motor vehicles.
- Nationally, 10% of all injuries are caused by slips, trips, and falls.

We all recognize that the winter months are especially hazardous due to the presence of ice and snow, but there are many other factors that contribute to slips, trips, and falls:

- Loose, irregular surfaces such as gravel, shifting floor tiles, and uneven sidewalks, can make it difficult to maintain your footing.
- Oil, grease and other liquids can make walking surfaces extremely slick.
- Insufficient light can make it difficult to see obstacles and notice changes in the walking surface.
- Shoes with slick soles provide insufficient traction, while platform shoes and high heels increase your vulnerability to uneven surfaces.
- Moving too fast increases the likelihood you will misjudge a step or encounter a hazard before you have a chance to notice it.
- Carrying items can both obstruct your vision and impair your balance.
- Inattention and distraction interfere with your awareness of all of these hazards and increase your risk of injury.
- Stairs present a special challenge, especially those that are taller, shorter, have a smaller tread depth, or are otherwise irregular.
- Obstructed aisles or walkways present tripping hazards or require frequent changes of direction, throwing you off balance.



## PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS

Slips and falls are one of the most common sources of injury in many workplaces, whether it's an office environment or a shop floor. You may be creating an environment for a possible fall without even knowing it.

### Have you ever:

- ran down a flight of stairs?
- walked along a corridor while reading something?
- worked on a machine with a greasy spill nearby?

Everyone can probably answer "yes" to at least one of the above.



## AVOIDING A FALL IS UP TO YOU.

- Check your shoes. What kind are you wearing? Are the soles loose or worn? If so, replace them.
- Look for tripping hazards. If you see something in an aisle way such as litter or extension cords, move or report them. Also watch for loose or torn carpeting, mats, or runners that can send you or someone else stumbling and falling.

- Obey signs such as "Caution: Wet Floor." Be careful when you come indoors when it's raining or snowing. Your shoes or boots will slide more easily when wet.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Don't carry heavy or bulky



- loads obstructing your view up or down stairs and ramps.
- Don't store things on or near stairways. Someone could trip and fall to the bottom.
- Keep your head up while walking. Don't run down a hallway and remember no horseplay!

### If you do fall:

- Keep your limbs parallel to the ground.
- Slap the ground with a hand and extended fingers to absorb part of the impact.
- Bend your arms toward the body.
- Try to roll onto your thighs or buttocks to prevent bone injuries.
- Don't move if you think you've hurt yourself. Wait for help.

## WHY IS PREVENTION OF SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS IMPORTANT?

Some sixty thousand workers get injured annually and represents a large percent of the "time-loss injuries" that were accepted by workers' compensation. Not mentioning a great economical loss, it amounts for a lot of pain and suffering and sometimes (much too often) even death.

These injuries, in most cases, do not have to happen. They could be prevented by:

- understanding how fall accidents happen,
- identifying the trouble areas, and
- eliminating or minimizing hazards of falling.

## HOW DO FALLS HAPPEN?

Statistics show that the majority (60 percent) of falls happen on the same level resulting from slips and trips. The remaining 40 percent are falls from heights.

### Slips

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

### Trips

Trips happen when your foot collides (strikes, hits) an object causing you to lose your 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
- uneven (steps, thresholds) walking surfaces



### HOW TO 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.

### 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
- securing (tacking, taping, etc.) 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
- replacing burned out light bulbs and faulty switches

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. Re-coating or replacing floors, installing mats, 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-slip 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.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID FALLING AT WORK?

It is important remembering that safety is everybody business. However, it is the employers' responsibility to provide safe work environment for all employees. Employees can improve their own safety too.

#### You can reduce the risk of slipping on wet flooring by:

- taking your time and paying attention to where you are going
- adjusting your stride to a pace that is suitable for the walking surface and the tasks you are doing
- making wide turns at corners.

#### You can reduce the risk of tripping by:

- By ensuring there is adequate light sources for your tasks
- using a flashlight if you enter a dark room where there is no light
- Not letting things you are carrying or pushing prevent you from seeing any obstructions spills, etc.



*TDCJ is committed to Preventing slips, trips, and falls on the job but it takes **teamwork**. Everyone must work together to make your workplace as safe and accident free as possible.*

*Develop the skills to recognize, avoid, and control potential slipping, tripping, and falling hazards to prevent injuries both on and off the job.*



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