Facts

Slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents. They cause 15% of all accidental deaths, and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a total of 5,657 fatal work injuries for calendar year 2007. Of the fatality cases, 847 were associated with falls. In addition, of the 1,078,140 nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work in 2008, there were 260,610 cases associated with slips and falls.

Fall injuries constitute a considerable financial burden: workers' compensation and medical costs associated with occupational fall incidents have been estimated at approximately $70 billion annually in the United States. The most frequent complaints related to slips and falls are shoulder, back, elbow, wrist and knee injuries.

Regulations

The two regulatory standards that apply to slips, trips, and fall are OSHA 29 CFR 1910.22, walking-working surfaces, and the ANSI A1264.2-2006, provision for the slip resistance on walking/working surfaces.

Causes of slips, trips and falls vary considerably and can include one or more of the following:

- Walkway surface substances and spills; including oil, water, and/or other liquid surface contamination
- Lack of training and/or knowledge about slips, trips and falls
- Mats or rugs which become unanchored or loose
- Weather-related conditions like rain, snow and/or ice
- Use of inappropriate footwear
- Walkway surfaces that are in disrepair
- Sheen/smooth walkway surfaces that do not allow for adequate footwear-traction

Surprisingly, approximately 70 percent of slips, trips, and falls occur on level walking surfaces. Training employees to use hazard-awareness and prevention practices is essential to reducing those numbers. Once trained, common sense also plays an important role in slips, trips and fall prevention.

Prevention

OSHA indicates some very good floor safety recommendations for slips, trips and fall prevention, some of which include:

- Keep floor surfaces clean and dry
- Ensure wet-floor warning signs are posted in and around wet floor locations as well as providing and maintaining adequate drainage
- Maintain clear aisles and passageways and prevent obstructions
- Ensure walkway surfaces are in good repair
- Provide floor plugs for power equipment to ensure power cords are not run across walkway paths
- Report and clean up spills immediately
- Provide non-slip coatings or surfaces in slippery locations
- Minimize carpet and matting trip hazards
Use prudent housekeeping procedures and provide adequate lighting in poorly lit areas such as halls and stairwells

Maintain and eliminate uneven floor surfaces

Links

1. Preventing slips & trips training materials
2. Skid-resistant shoe covers
3. Nonskid tape
4. Anti-slip floor coating
5. Matting product offerings

Sources


NIOSH: Fall Injuries Prevention in the Workplace

OSHA: Slips, Trips & Falls - Identification & Prevention

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Find even more information you can use to help make informed decisions about the regulatory issues you face in your workplace every day. View all Quick Tips Technical Resources at www.grainger.com/quicktips.

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