



## SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS: *Unsafe & Unclean Floor Surfaces*

In our workplace, we tend to walk from place to place, giving very little thought as to how we'll get there, what obstacles we may encounter or what may be on the floor that can cause us to slip, trip or fall. Every year, slips, trips and falls rank at or near the top as one of the leading causes of injuries at work, in our home or while we're participating in our favorite hobby. Throughout the School District of Philadelphia, slips, trips and falls are the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common cause of injury to employees, most of them known to be occurring "On Same Level."

Let's take a closer look at a few potential causes:

- **Unsafe floor surfaces** – broken floor tiles, missing floor drain covers, or rolled-up carpeting
- **Unclean floor surfaces** – spilled water (where's the source?), dirt/grease flying from equipment or machinery, poor housekeeping practices
- **Improper footwear** – smooth/slippery soles, open-toed shoes, worn out shoes, untied shoe laces, leather soles, etc.
- **Inadequate hazard identification** – A floor with a sudden change of elevation, broken floor drain, unguarded floor channel, heaved sidewalk due to ice/snow conditions, etc.
- **Insufficient training** – All employees should be trained on hazard recognition and guidelines regarding footwear, floor maintenance and reporting unsafe conditions.



### Tips for Preventing Slip, Trip and Fall Injuries

Did you know that in the United States, 50% of slip, trip or fall injuries are caused by unsafe, unclean floor surfaces? Following are some helpful tips for preventing these types of injuries:

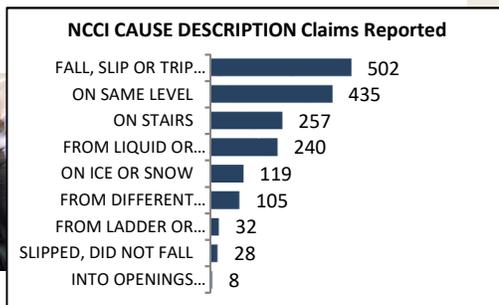
- Always pay attention to what is going on around you.
- Plan your route, anticipate potential hazards and avoid/eliminate them.
- Don't make sudden turns or stops.
- Move cautiously near corners, especially when carrying things.
- Be aware of any blind corners, problem floor surfaces, or other hazardous areas.

In the School District, there were 435 slips, trips, and falls in the last five (5) years that occurred "On Same Level" were due to unsafe and/or unclean floor surfaces.

## SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS: *Unsafe & Unclean Floor Surfaces* continued

### School District of Philadelphia Fall or Slip Causes

Valuation Date: April 30, 2021 (2016-2021)



Here are a few common injury scenarios reported by School District employees:

*“I stepped over a board and slipped in the mud and fell.”*

*“While walking into the building, I stepped on trash and fell.”*

*“I was picking up cardboard and slipped on a piece.”*

*“I tripped over bags in the hallway and fell against the wall.”*

*“I tripped over tangled computer cords.”*

Based on the scenarios above, can you think of ways to prevent common slip, trip, fall injuries?

### Additional Tips for Prevention:

- Don't hurry or walk too fast.
- Watch where you are walking – even in familiar areas.
- Avoid distractions like cell phones or reading while walking.
- Wear proper footwear.
- Look out for changes in elevation.
- Don't obstruct your vision by carrying a large package – ask for help if needed.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Pay attention to weather conditions.

### Spill Cleanup

- When it comes to accidental spills on the floor, you can monitor any walking surfaces that are susceptible to periodic spills. Provide cleanup tools and materials in a nearby location so they are readily accessible.
- Use warning signs to mark any areas that have not been cleaned and any surfaces that are wet from mopping and cleaning. Follow instructions for any cleaners or floor treatments used in the facility. Proper use of cleaning agents and proper application of floor treatments is vital for good floor maintenance.
- All employees should be trained on hazard recognition and guidelines regarding footwear, floor maintenance, spill clean-up, and reporting unsafe conditions.

### View the World from a Safety Lens

The truth is that hazards are all around us. Sometimes, it is difficult to see them, especially when we are working in familiar conditions. Instead of going through our usual routines, we should always stay vigilant and keep an eye out for safety. It could be as simple as noticing a tear in the carpeting, a box sticking out into a walkway or a spill on the floor.

While noticing something out of the ordinary is the first step, you must also know how to report a hazard in your department. Perhaps you could clean up some water on the floor yourself, but stop and think – where is the water coming from? Is there a leaking ice machine in the break room? Your safety and facilities teams may need to step in. Or let's say it is a rainy day and people are tracking in water to the tile floor. Perhaps your facility needs to install a slip resistant mat or runner in the entryway. Don't just walk by and assume someone else will see a hazard or address it. You can be the catalyst to make these changes happen – you just need to keep your eyes open, think about the bigger picture and let someone know about your concerns.

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