

Slips and Falls

Slips and falls cause thousands of accidents and serious injuries every year. A tragic number of cases end in permanent crippling or death! The dollar cost is tremendous.

No business or industry is free from the danger of slips and falls. The hazards exist everywhere – stores and factories, sidewalks and stairs, homes and playgrounds – everywhere!

A little extra care, a few cents for correction or materials, and prompt attention to unsafe floor surfaces will easily and quickly prevent most falls.

Here's what to do – If the unsafe condition is due to:

- (1) **WETNESS.** Divert the water, ditch, drain or otherwise prevent it from getting on the walking surface in the first place. If it is impossible or impractical to dry the floor, use duck boards or similar devices to keep feet from contact with the wet surface; or cover the area with an abrasive (nonskid) coating.
- (2) **LEAKS AND SPILLS.** Stop the leak at its source. Make all necessary repairs and establish maintenance and inspection procedures to prevent recurrence of the leak. All employees should be instructed to clean up spills promptly. If clean up must be delayed, the affected area should be cordoned off to reduce the slip and fall exposure.
- (3) **OIL OR GREASE.** Stop the oil or grease from getting on the floor at its origin. Where this is not always possible, (such as under vehicles), wipe up all excess oil or grease. Use a nonflammable absorbent to clean up the residue. Dispose of oil soaked rags and absorbances promptly and safely.
- (4) **RAIN, ICE OR SNOW.** Stop at the source if possible by use of canopies, eaves troughs, location of down spouts, etc. Use grille type flooring so snow falls through. Shovel snow promptly before it packs. Use safe commercial compounds to melt ice so it can be cleared off. For ice and snow that can not be removed, apply coarse sand to provide an abrasive walking surface. Door mats and/or lengths of rubber runners at building entrances help prevent rain water, snow and ice from getting on floors and creating slipping hazards.
- (5) **OBJECTS ON THE FLOOR.** Prevent the development of tripping and slipping hazards from such things as scrap, tool parts, etc., on the floor. Provide and USE scrap boxes, tool holders, tote boxes or whatever may be necessary for this purpose. Train employees to pick up such items whenever they see them. Establish regular housekeeping procedures and inspections.
- (6) **SMOOTH SURFACES.** Safeguarding of smooth surfaces will depend on the circumstances involved. The basic objective is to make walking and standing surfaces as non-slippery as possible. To illustrate, smooth terrazzo steps should have at least "roughened" nosings. These are 3 1/2" to 4" carborundum type or other nonskid strips set flush with the rest of the tread. Running boards, catwalks, machine steps, truck beds, ramps, platforms, washrooms—any and every place where a person steps or stands, should be made of nonslip material or should have a nonslip coating. Anti-slip materials include grilles, knurled, corrugated or other roughened metal plates, etc. Anti-slip coatings include special "paints" or other surfacers which contain abrasives.

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Workers should wear footgear with nonskid soles and heels. Under special conditions, footgear should have special soles and heels such as imbedded abrasives, hob nails, cleats or the like.

- (7) **POLISHING WAXES.** Floors in stores, halls and offices are of many types – hardwood, rubber tile, cork, etc. Each presents special problems of maintenance for cleaning and preservation without damage to the surface. What is ideal for one may be harmful to others. There are anti-slip waxes or other anti-slip floor treatment materials for all common types of flooring. Because of the importance of selecting the proper anti-slip wax or material for the individual floor, the manufacturer of the flooring material or of floor treatment materials should be consulted for the exact product which will provide anti-slip treatment for the floor in question.

Nonskid mats, runners or carpet strips are highly effective to prevent slips and falls in many areas without harm to the flooring and without detracting from its beauty.

Contact your local Great American Loss Prevention Specialist for additional information.

The loss prevention information and advice presented in this brochure are intended only to advise our insureds and their managers of a variety of methods and strategies based on generally accepted safe practices, for controlling potentially loss producing situations commonly occurring in business premises and/or operations. They are not intended to warrant that all potential hazards or conditions have been evaluated or can be controlled. They are not intended as an offer to write insurance coverage for such conditions or exposures, or to simply that Great American Insurance Company will write such coverage. The liability of Great American Insurance Company is limited to the specific terms, limits and conditions of the insurance policies issued.
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