

Slip, Trip, and Fall Prevention

Slips, trips, and falls are a constant hazard in many work environments. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 887 workers died in the U.S. from slips, trips, and falls in 2017 and was second only to motor vehicle accidents. A common misconception is that workers have to fall from a high level to suffer serious injuries or death. However, the leading causes of slip, trip, and fall injuries are wet or slippery surfaces and poor housekeeping. Below are additional common causes of slip, trip, and fall injuries.

Slips occur when there is less friction or traction between your feet and the walking-working surface, resulting in a loss of balance. Common causes of slips include spills, polished floors, sloped surfaces, loose rugs and mats, wearing the wrong kind of shoes, and weather related hazards such as snow, rain, or ice.

Trips occur when your foot or leg hits an object and you're moving with enough momentum to be thrown off balance. Common causes of trips include uncovered electrical cords, electrical cord covers, cluttered walkways, elevation changes, unsecured carpets and mats, uneven surfaces, and damaged stairs.

Falls occur when you are too far off your center of balance. The two basic types are same-level and elevated falls. Same-level falls are most frequent, but elevated falls are more severe. Common causes of falls include improper use of ladders, damaged floor surfaces, loading docks, and unprotected floor holes, pits, and vaults.

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review common slip, trip, and fall hazards in your workplace and discuss how they can be avoided.

Stay Positive: Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe work place, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

Share a Story, Ask for a Story: Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Don't be a statistic!

In 2018, 15 employees reported injuries at Northwestern involving slips, trips, and falls. These injuries resulted in 706 lost days, 882 restricted days, and \$593,387.10 in costs to the university.

Tips to stay safe

- Inspect your work area for slip, trip, and fall hazards prior to beginning work.
- Ensure portable ladders are inspected before use and are properly used (e.g., stepladders should be spread fully and locked into position).
- Use handrails when you walk up and down stairs.
- If you see something you might slip or trip on, immediately remove it or contact your supervisor.
- To eliminate distractions, avoid walking while texting or talking on a mobile device.
- Maintain good housekeeping and avoid clutter.
- Ensure adequate lighting is in your work area.
- Barricade areas with slip, trip, and fall hazards to prevent people from the entering the area.

Report injuries and near misses on the Risk Management [website](#) or call 847.491.5582

Learn more: Complete Slips, Trips, and Falls training at learn.northwestern.edu



Did you know?

40% of Northwestern slip, trip, and fall injuries involve ladders or stairways

Safety at Home

While slips, trips, and falls can occur anywhere, according to the National Safety Council (NSC), they most often occur at home. Use these tips to make your home safer:

- ✓ Arrange or remove furniture so there's plenty of room for walking.
- ✓ Add grab bars near your bathtub or shower to prevent slips, trips, and falls.
- ✓ Ensure elderly family and friends use canes or walkers for stability.
- ✓ When attending events in arenas, stadiums, and theaters, be cautious around bleachers, crowded aisles and stairways as slip, trip, and fall hazards may be present.

For Additional Information

Contact Gwen Butler, Director, Environmental Health & Safety, at 847.491.4936

Do you or your team have a safety story you'd like to share? Contact Risk Management at gwen.butler@northwestern.edu for details.