Background

About Slips, Trips & Falls

Slips, trips and falls are a leading cause of workplace accidents. Every year in Canada, about 60,000 people are injured in workplace falls. Falls can result in bruises, cuts, muscle strains and sprains, broken bones, concussions and even death. You can slip if there is not enough friction to allow your footwear to grip the walking surface. You can trip if your foot catches on something, throwing you off balance. Some possible causes of slips, trips and falls are listed below:

Housekeeping issues
- Spills or wet, oily or dirty surfaces
- Debris or objects on the floor, loose cords and cables, and open drawers

Condition of floors and stairways
- Loose flooring or floor covering (e.g., mats, rugs, tiles)
- Uneven floors, steps or doorsteps
- Surfaces with different degrees of traction
- Stairs that are uneven, in poor repair or have no handrail

Environmental and outdoor conditions
- Snow, ice or rain
- Poor lighting

Employee behaviour
- Carrying something that blocks their view, especially on stairs
- Rushing, running or taking part in horseplay
- Failing to clean up spills or other hazards quickly

Preventing Slips, Trips & Falls

Here are some suggestions for preventing slips, trips and falls in your workplace:

Housekeeping issues
- Practise good housekeeping (e.g., clean up spills quickly, keep floors clean and free of clutter, use warning signs to indicate wet floors)
- Keep walkways, aisles and stairs clear
- Cover or tape down cables, cords and wires
- Close drawers and cabinets

Condition of floors and stairways
- Maintain floors and floor coverings
- Install secure handrails on stairs
- Use slip-resistant flooring

Environmental and outdoor conditions
- Make sure lighting is adequate
- Clear snow and ice in outdoor areas
- Keep outdoor surfaces in good repair
Employee behaviour

- Train workers on safe operating procedures (SOPs) related to slips, trips & falls
- Make sure employees wear appropriate footwear

Here are some suggestions for preparing for your Safety Talk:

1. Review the background information and materials.
2. Look up any policies or safe operating procedures (SOPs) that are relevant to this topic (e.g., spill cleanup, housekeeping, floor maintenance). If you do not have written procedures, think about the practices you use.
3. If possible, find out how many injuries and “near miss” incidents have resulted from slips, trips and falls in your company or location in the last year.
4. Inspect your workplace using the Inspection Checklist (or your own checklist). Identify any slip, trip and fall hazards or potential hazards, including areas where materials or merchandise are often left on the floor, areas where spills often occur or water is tracked in from outdoors, and places where flooring is uneven.
5. Get a blank Attendance Form. Make one copy for each participant of any handouts you plan to use.
   
   For example:
   - Company SOPs (as identified above)
   - Safety Check sheets
6. Follow up on any unanswered questions from the last Safety Talk.

Note that this Safety Talk does not take the place of training employees on your safe operating procedures related to slip, trip and fall hazards.
Safety Talk Meeting Outline

Follow up on any outstanding safety issues from the previous meeting.

Briefly introduce the topic (in 1–2 minutes) for employees, using “About Slips, Trips & Falls” as a reference.

If appropriate, report on the number of slip, trip and fall injuries and/or “near miss” incidents in your workplace.

Ask: What can we do to prevent slips, trips and falls from happening?
Discuss how your safe operating procedures (SOPs) and/or housekeeping procedures can prevent injuries. Make sure people know what to do about spills or clutter (or other slip, trip and fall hazards that are common to your workplace).

Ask: Where in our workplace is a slip, trip or fall most likely to happen? Why?
Tour the workplace to look at the high-risk areas and talk about why they were identified, what can be done to minimize risks and who should take the action. If you see any actual slip, trip and fall hazards, discuss what should be done about them. Make sure employees know how to report a hazard that they can't fix.

Note any hazards that are new or haven't been addressed by SOPs.

Ask: Do you think that it's possible to prevent all slips, trips and falls in our workplace?
Talk about what it would take to eliminate all slip, trip and fall injuries. To be successful, everyone would have to take responsibility for working safely and maintaining a safe workplace at all times.

Note any issues that require follow-up.

Thank everyone for their time and attention.

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