

## SLIPS/TRIPS/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.



A little extra care, a few cents for correction or materials, and PROMPT ATTENTION to unsafe floor surfaces can be factors in preventing most slips and falls.

### Slips:

Slips happen where there is too little friction or traction between a person's feet and the walking surface. Common causes of slips are:

- Wet or oily surfaces
- Occasional spills
- Weather hazards
- Loose, unanchored rugs or mats
- Flooring or other walking surfaces that do not have the same degree of traction in all areas

### Trips:

Trips happen when feet collide (strikes, hits) an object causing you to lose balance. Common causes of trips are:

- Obstructed view
- Poor lighting
- Clutter in pathway
- Wrinkled carpeting

- Uncovered cables
- Open drawers
- Uneven walking surfaces

Safeguarding of pedestrian 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 3.5 to 4 inch carborundum type or other nonskid strips set flush with the rest of the tread. Foyers, main entrances, walks, stairs, pool decking, ramps, platforms, restrooms and any other place where a person steps or stands should be made of non-slip materials or should have a non-slip coating. Anti-slip materials include grilles, knurled, corrugated or other roughened surface. Anti-slip coatings include special paints and other surfacers which contain abrasives.

Flooring types differ. There are anti-slip waxes or anti-slip flooring treatment materials for all common types of flooring. Because of the importance of selecting the proper anti-slip wax or material for the specific flooring, the manufacturer of the flooring material should be consulted for the exact product which will provide the most effective anti-slip properties.

Nonskid mats, runners or carpet strips are highly effective in preventing slips and falls with the added benefit of not harming underlying flooring or detracting from its beauty.

#### **Management Controls:**

Good management controls will help you identify problem areas, determine preventative/corrective actions and provide documentation of inspections, recommendations and action taken.

A good system should involve:

**Planning:** Identify key areas of risk and set goals for improvement. Involve your whole staff in identifying areas of concern. Remember, there will be about 40 cases of a slip or stumble resulting in no or minor injury for every major injury/accident.

**Organization:** Give employees responsibility to ensure that all areas are kept safe, e.g. spills cleaned up quickly, access routes are free from clutter and storage, and adequate lighting in good condition is available and operational.

**Control:** Ensure that procedures and work processes are being carried out properly. Floors are not left wet, housekeeping is good, and lights are repaired / replaced quickly. Records of cleaning and maintenance work are maintained. Inspect your premises regularly and document findings and actions.

**Monitoring and Review:** Monitor your accident investigation and inspection reports. Ask employees about existing control measures, areas of concern and ideas for improvement. Involve your staff.

Wet Floor Signs may not be your most effective line of defense. 65% of the time wet floor signs were displayed, the floors were not wet. Most pedestrians ignore the signs and in some cases physically move them from where they were originally placed.

The National Flooring Safety Institute is now issuing flooring Wet Static Coefficient of Friction ratings to various flooring types. Samples are submitted by manufacturers to the NFSI Research Center. The samples are tested in the laboratory and if they obtain a SCOF value of 0.6 or greater they are exposed to real world conditions for 30 days and then re-tested. If the product continues to meet an SCOF of 0.6 or greater the product will gain NFSI "Certification" status and be classified as "High Traction" which is defined as products meeting a higher standard of slip resistance both in the lab and in real world conditions.