

Don't slip into winter

Hazards and controls

According to the Workers' Compensation Board, between October and December approximately 13-14 per cent of all claims are related to slipping or losing balance.

What are slip hazards and how can you prevent?

Slip hazards are areas or items that can cause the potential to slip. Wet floors caused by melting ice and snow, dust, dirt, debris, wet floors and smooth surfaces can potentially be slipping hazards.

To reduce the risk of slips, you should:

- Keep floor clean.
- Use 'wet floor' signage.
- Use mats at entrances and ensure it lays flat.
- Keep walking surfaces clear and in good condition.
- Use sanding on outdoor walkways.
- Shovel walkways.
- Apply traction devices on surfaces that are not skid resistant such as, loading docks, gang planks and ramps.
- Apply traction devices, like anti-slip tape/grip tape in high traffic areas if appropriate.

Most important, pay attention when you are walking and re-evaluate the worksite throughout the day.

Footwear

Wearing proper footwear helps prevent slips and injuries. When working outdoors it is important to wear the right footwear, this could include:

- Cleats. It is important to remove when entering a building as it can cause a slip.
- Winter footwear with good traction. Footwear with traction should be worn when working or walking to work and through parking lots.

How to reduce the risks of slips

Supervisors

- Prepare a winter maintenance plan. Include indoor and outdoor activities like snow removal, and cleaning of floors.
- Consider the history of changes in the worksite. Does ice build up in predictable places? Where does snow melt when coming indoors?
- Prepare required equipment and supplies (e.g. ice melt) in advance of the change in the seasons.
- Provide warning signs for slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Review your company's incidents and potentially serious incidents and discuss with workers to mitigate in the coming season. Discuss and share stories of slip injuries or near misses on your work sites.
- Discuss slip hazards with workers at meetings.
- Empower workers to take the time needed to walk carefully around the worksite.

Workers

- Wear appropriate footwear and traction aids, such as cleats.
- Avoid distracted walking. Stay focused on moving through the worksite, especially when slippery surfaces are present and in transition areas (e.g. doorways).
- Be aware of slipping hazards that change through the day (e.g. where ice melts or re-freezes through the day).
- When you identify a trouble spot, try to remedy the issue immediately (e.g. apply ice melt to ice) and report it to your supervisor.
- Walk like a penguin when on slippery surfaces and keep your hands free.
- Wear proper winter gloves when walking outside to help protect hands from injury if a fall does occur.
- Use traction aids and take time to move safely around the work site and your vehicle.
- Maintain three-point contact when getting in and out of vehicles.
- If you do slip and fall, don't be embarrassed – report the incident to your supervisor.

Reporting a Slip

We have all slipped and fallen at some point and looked around to see if anyone saw. Instead of being embarrassed that you fell, check that you are okay, and then inform your supervisor of the incident. Your reporting can help prevent future slips, trips or falls!

Shop talk

- Review daily/weekly changing conditions and how they impact the different work surfaces (e.g. note if new mats have been installed at entryways in preparation for winter).
- Inspect your work place for slip hazards.
- Identify how to move about the space safely.
- Discuss with workers what can be done to prevent a slip, and challenge workers to find other ways to prevent slips.
- What can be prepared in the fall to reduce chances of slips through the winter?

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