



**Preventing Falls...  
One Step at a Time**

***The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation tracks incidents of slips, trips and falls in Ohio workplaces. Slips, trips and falls are the leading cause for worker injury.***

Work-related slip, trip and fall incidents can frequently result in serious disabling injuries that impact a workers' ability to do his or her job, often resulting in: A - Lost workdays; B - Reduced productivity; and C - Expensive worker compensation claims.

However, the rate of slips, trips and falls in Ohio workplaces has been steadily declining. Employers are doing more to manage risk by implementing comprehensive prevention programs that include employee training, hazard assessment and creating policies.

### **How do falls impact businesses?**

According to the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation, 21,513 of the 101,013 workers' compensation claims filed in 2011 were for occupational slips, trips, and falls. That's more than one in five workplace injuries due to falls! Employees who are age 45 or older are more likely to fall in the workplace than younger workers. Twenty-nine percent of these injuries result in the worker missing eight or more days of work.

### **Additional facts about slips, trips and falls in the workplace:**

- Workers age 45 and older who slip, trip or fall are most likely to sprain a knee, while younger workers are most likely to sprain their ankles.
- About one-third (33.1 percent) of slips, trips and falls claims for workers age 45 and older result in lost time, while only one in four (24.6 percent) younger workers lose time at work.
- Among workers under age 45, men are more likely to fall than women; this trend is reversed for workers age 45 and older.
- The average BWC claim for lost time due to slips, trips and falls is \$31,935.

### **Top 10 simple strategies to reduce falls at work:**

- Provide and maintain a written housekeeping program.
- Keep floors clean and dry.
- Use proper cleaning procedures for floors.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes.
- Prevent entry into areas that are wet.
- Have adequate lighting.
- Take your time and pay attention to where you are going.
- Provide and maintain a written snow/ice removal plan.
- Place additional mats if necessary in entrances during ice, snow, and rainy conditions.
- Use step stools rather than standing on furniture.

## Five focus areas for falls prevention

**Housekeeping:** Bad housekeeping is estimated to cause 50 percent of all slip, trip and fall injuries. So improving housekeeping would eliminate a large number of injuries. Good housekeeping doesn't cost money; it just takes a little personal effort.

Ensure there is a suitable walkway; keep it clear and free of cords and obstructions. Keep rooms tidy. Store items out of the way.

**Stairs and handrails:** A leading cause of injury on stairs is missing or damaged handrails. Enclosed stairways should have a handrail on at least one side, preferably the right side when descending. Open stairways should have a handrail on both sides. Handrails have two safety functions: 1) to act as a brace for someone walking up or down the stairs, and 2) to offer protection against falling on the open side.

Make certain that all handrails are secure and that all stairways are well lit and free of obstacles such as shoes. When carrying a load on the stairs, always hold the handrail. If you have a landing and intend to use a small area rug, secure it with a nonslip pad.

**Contaminants on and defects in walking surfaces:** Potentially slippery walking surface. Contamination or defects can be classified as anything that ends up on a walking surface or is part of the walking surface. Examples include rainwater, oil, cardboard, product wrapping, dust, rugs, linoleum, etc. Most walking surfaces become slippery once they become contaminated. Defects may develop over time or be due to a major event. Preventing contamination and immediately fixing defects of the walking surface will reduce or even eliminate the risk of slips, trips and falls. Use nonslip pads with rugs. Repair leaking pipes. Secure loose steps.

When the contamination or defect occurs, employers should have a policy and procedure on how to report the hazard and take measures to address it.

**Environment:** Environmental issues that contribute to slips, trips and falls include lighting (natural or otherwise), loud or unfamiliar noises, the weather, humidity, condensation, and more. Here are some ways the environment can contribute to slips, trips and falls: Too much light on a shiny floor can cause a glare; Too little light can prevent an employee or customer from seeing a hazard; Unfamiliar and loud noises may be distracting; Rainwater on a walking surface may create a fall hazard; Cold weather can cause frost and ice to form, which may create slippery surfaces; and Condensation may make a smooth floor slippery.

**Footwear:** Good footwear may prevent many slips, trips and falls. Generally, footwear at work should be suitable for the working environment. To determine the most appropriate footwear for your workplace, consider these characteristics: Sturdy, well-fitting shoes with non-skid soles; Sole tread patterns; Sole material type and hardness; Comfort; and Durability.

**For more tips and resources to prevent falls, visit:**

[www.steadyu.ohio.gov](http://www.steadyu.ohio.gov)