

# Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls

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Slips, trips and falls can be prevented by changing or modifying the:

- 1) Footwear,
- 2) Surface,
- 3) Awareness or behavior.

It is usually awareness/behavior that contributes the most to a slip, trip or fall occurrence, but the best protection against them is a combination of the three solutions.

## **Use Nonskid Shoes and Surfaces When Available - FOOTWEAR**

If you work in an area with slippery surfaces, such as a kitchen or outdoors, wear shoes that have slip-resistant soles. Ask your supervisor about the correct shoe for your job. Keep your shoes free of grease and oil. Placing mats or rough-grade coverings on large walkways helps to minimize falls.

## **Clean Up Spills – SURFACE**

Slippery surfaces often do not appear dangerous until you happen to step onto them, and then it is too late. Clean up grease, water, and other forms of spills as you notice them. Cover icy and greasy spots with sand, dirt, or some other type of absorbent material. If you do not know what to use or where it is located, ASK!!!

## **Maintain Proper Lighting – SURFACE/AWARENESS OR BEHAVIOR**

We have all walked through a dark room and banged into a toy, tool, or errant piece of furniture. Inadequate lighting can camouflage what is in your way, so replace light fixtures or bulbs that do not work. Make sure stairwells are brightly lit so you can see the steps properly. When you enter a darkened room, always turn the light on first, even if you are staying for only a moment. Keep walkways in poorly lit areas clear of obstructions.

## **Stair Safety - SURFACE/AWARENESS OR BEHAVIOR**

Stairs which are too steep or not steep enough have the potential to cause trips and falls. Because it is very easy to lose your footing while climbing stairs, go slowly and be careful of worn or broken steps. Never run up or down stairs and avoid skipping steps. If you are carrying a load while climbing up or down stairs, hold it so your vision is not blocked and keep one hand free, if possible, to grasp the banister or wall railing. If the load you are carrying does require both hands to carry up or down stairs, consider using mechanical assistance, splitting the load, or taking another route.

## **Maintenance of Walking Working Surfaces - SURFACE/ AWARENESS OR BEHAVIOR**

Keep aisles and surfaces dedicated to foot traffic clear of obstructions and hazards. When setting up, say, for a banquet in a large hall or outside patio where there are many chairs and tables, take care as you navigate around or through the obstacles to clear your path.

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## **Do not Be in a Hurry – AWARENESS OR BEHAVIOR**

Slips, trips and falls often occur when people are in a hurry, because then they often take shortcuts and pay no attention to what they are doing. We have all tried to jump across or go through an obstacle instead of walking "the long way around" to where we are going. These can be unsafe acts. Learn to slow down, to walk sure-footedly, and to avoid potentially hazardous shortcuts.

## **Pay Attention to Your Steps – AWARENESS OR BEHAVIOR**

Avoid injuries by paying attention to where you are walking. Learning to recognize and avoid potential hazards saves time, money, and injury. Resist the temptation to take shortcuts, because shortcuts are usually not designed for foot traffic and frequently have unstable, shaky, or slippery surfaces.

## **Practice Walking Safely – AWARENESS OR BEHAVIOR**

If you cannot avoid walking on slippery or wet surfaces, practice walking across them safely. To quote from Bill Murray's movie *What About Bob*: "Baby steps, Bob. Baby steps." Do not try to run, jump, or slide across slick surfaces. Instead, take slow, short steps. The smaller the step, the smaller the correction you will need to make if you do slip a little. For additional balance, keep your hands at your sides (not in your pockets). Carrying things reduces your ability to regain your balance if you slip. Not all surfaces are obviously slippery—remember that a freshly polished floor can be very slick even though it does not usually look hazardous.