



# SAFETY FLASH

OCT 2011



## Preventing slips, trips and falls

Slips and trips are the most common cause of major injuries at work and can happen almost anywhere. 95% of major slips result in broken bones and they can also be the initial cause for a range of other types of accidents such as a fall from heights.

There are a number of common causes of slips, trips, and falls. Typically: unsafe stairs, obstructions in walkways or on stairs, slippery surfaces or uneven surfaces, improper shoes, moving too fast, poor lighting or, being tired or distracted. Unfortunately, **not paying attention** is the most common. You're in hurry thinking of something else, so you don't look where you're walking or what's around you, and next thing you know, you're on the floor.

Most of these accidents can be prevented if you watch where you're stepping, know what hazards to look for, and try to maintain your work area to reduce the possibility that you or someone else will end up flat on his/her back. Learning to identify the hazards that might cause you to slip, trip, or fall is the key to avoiding these accidents.

Your best protection against hazard is to be **ALERT!!** Be especially careful in places where the floor elevation changes. Keep your eyes open if you work around manholes and drains to make sure they're not uncovered. If there is clutter in your path, move it before you proceed or walk carefully around it.

### Slips:

Slips happen where there is too little friction or traction between the footwear 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 same degree of traction in all areas



### Trips:

Trips happen when your foot collides (strikes, hits) an object causing you to lose your balance and consequently fall. Common causes of tripping are:

- ◆ obstructed view
- ◆ poor lighting
- ◆ clutter in your way
- ◆ wrinkled carpeting
- ◆ uncovered cables
- ◆ bottom drawers not being closed
- ◆ uneven (steps, thresholds) walking surfaces

### How to prevent falls due to slips and trips?

Both slips and trips result from some a kind of unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet and the ground or walking surface. This shows that good housekeeping, quality of walking surfaces (flooring), selection of proper footwear, and appropriate pace of walking are critical for preventing fall accidents.

Sometime, even when you're careful, you can fall. But you can still try to keep from being injured seriously by "falling correctly."

There are two ways to do it: One way is to roll with the fall. The other is to bend your elbows and knees so your legs and arms absorb to fall.

If you fall, it's a good idea to get medical attention. You can't always tell if something has been torn, sprained or broken.

### Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is the first and the most important fundamental level of preventing falls due to slips and trips. It includes:

- ◆ cleaning all spills immediately
- ◆ marking spills and wet areas
- ◆ mopping or sweeping debris from floors
- ◆ removing obstacles from walkways and always keeping them free of clutter
- ◆ securing (tacking, taping, etc.) mats, rugs and carpets that do not lay flat
- ◆ always closing file cabinet or storage drawers
- ◆ covering cables that cross walkways
- ◆ keeping working areas and walkways well lit
- ◆ replacing used light bulbs and faulty switches



Without good housekeeping practices, any other preventive measures such as installation of sophisticated flooring, specialty footwear or training on techniques of walking and safe falling will never be fully effective.

Slippery floors are always dangerous. If they are waxed or polished, wet, take a real slow approach. Other possible problems: oil, grease, or chemical spills, or floors made of tile, marble, or other slippery surfaces. If the floor is wet, clean it up or report it immediately. And always be more cautious than you think you need to be.

To prevent accidents you must know how to identify hazards and what to do to correct or eliminate them. Routine inspections will help ensure all walking and working surfaces are free from slip, trip and fall hazards.

# Remember - Safety Starts With You!