

## Slips and trips in the workplace

Slips, trips and subsequent falls in the workplace can result in injury ranging in severity from the minor to the serious. A slip occurs when stability is lost between footwear and the floor surface and a trip when a person connects with an obstacle in their path and they lose balance.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics in Australia show that thousands of people are injured each year due to slip and trip incidents. With injuries mainly including musculoskeletal damage, cuts, fractures and dislocations, and with knees, ankles and backs impacted most frequently<sup>(1)</sup>. Additionally, these statistics show that from 2003 to 2015, 56% of the reported incidents were caused by environmental factors such as spills, poor maintenance of walkways, poor lighting and trip hazards<sup>(1)</sup>. Given these statistics, the environmental factors that contribute to such injuries should be effectively managed through good site practices, maintenance, internal safety audits and hazard identification and the implementation of appropriate control measures to minimise occurrence.

Additionally, factors such as the following can contribute to slip and trip incidents:

- ▼ ineffectual floor surface cleaning
- ▼ wet floor surfaces
- ▼ inherently slippery floor materials
- ▼ uneven or damaged floor surfaces
- ▼ area congestion due to crowds in public spaces through to inadequate storage space or shared workplaces
- ▼ floor transition areas and
- ▼ choice of footwear.

To minimise the risk of slips occurring care should be taken to manage floor cleaning activities to ensure that they are suitable, that

no residues are left behind and that signage and restricted access are maintained until the flooring is dry and ready for pedestrian traffic. Throughout the day spills should be immediately identified and promptly and effectively cleaned (as per the floor manufacturer's guidelines and established internal procedures), with areas restricted until they are deemed safe.

Some floor surfaces can be inherently slippery, slip resistance testing as per Australian Standards by a National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia (NATA) accredited laboratory can provide useful information in this regard.

General site maintenance should ensure that lighting is provided at appropriate lux levels (as per Australian Standards) and that surfaces are well maintained with damaged or lifting flooring promptly repaired. Staff awareness and training in hazard identification and workplace safety audits should highlight slip and trip hazards which should be promptly rectified. Furthermore the selection of footwear should be suitable for workplace activities whilst adhering to personal protective equipment and other site requirements.

Adopting measures to minimise the risk of slips and trips should assist in providing a safer workplace for staff, visitors, patrons and contractors.

(1) <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/slips-trips-falls> accessed 30/01/2018.



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