



State of Delaware Issue CLXXX August 2021
Produced by the Insurance Coverage Office

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5 Tips to Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that injuries due to slips, trips, and falls are the second-highest cause of days away from work. To put it into a financial perspective, an estimated 25 percent of reported injury claims are filed after an employee trips, slips, or falls. However, there are ways employees and employers can make the work environment a safer place for everyone.

How to Prevent Employee Injuries From Slips, Trips, & Falls

Employee injuries can be costly to a company. Here are five steps to minimize the risk for slips, trips and falls in the workplace.

1. Create a Slip, Trip, and Fall Risk Assessment Plan

The first step is to understand that housekeeping and maintenance are an integral part of safety. Cleaning is the perfect opportunity to simultaneously conduct risk assessments, and both should be routine in your workplace, not something done right before an inspection or after an accident. An easy way to keep the work location clean, organized, and risk-free is to create a plan whereby each employee is responsible for picking up after him/herself and specific cleaning duties that are inclusive of the entire work area are assigned and monitored. A written cleaning plan should be posted in an area that is easily accessible to all employees. It only takes a few steps to be proactive in workplace slip, trip, and fall prevention.

2. Keep Floors Clean and Dry

According to the National Floor Safety Institute (NFSI), 85% of worker's compensation claims are attributed to employees slipping on slick floors. Floors get wet. Mopping and spills are just a couple examples of what can make a floor slick. To prevent slips and falls, always put out a "wet floor" sign after mopping and spills. Attend to all spills as soon as possible, but if for some reason a spill cannot be immediately addressed, make sure the area of the spill is properly marked and traffic is restricted. If outside water frequently seeps in, moisture-absorbent mats can keep floors dry. Another option is to lay down anti-skid adhesive tape. It provides additional traction on slippery surfaces. It works especially well on slight inclines often found in long hallways.

3. Remove Obstacles from Floors

Anything can be considered a trip hazard if it's on the floor. Equipment, work materials, and everyday clutter can easily become obstacles on stairways, doorways, around corners, and on floors. To keep the workplace free of obstacles, it's necessary to make it a policy to continuously check areas to ensure the floors, etc. are free from clutter.

Here are a few workplace storage safety tips:

- Keep service areas, storerooms, hallways, and workstations clean and clutter-free
- Do not leave hose, cables, wires, tools, etc. laying across floors when not in use
- Avoid leaving briefcase, files, boxes, etc. laying in walkways
- Close all doors and drawers when not being used

4. Maintain Adequate Lighting Throughout the Workplace

The risk of accidents from slips, trips, and falls at work increases when there isn't adequate lighting. This includes all walkways, stairs, hallways, ramps, basements, and dock areas. If it is a construction site, every part must be well-lit at all times during work hours. It's also important to always turn on the lights first when entering a dark room. This means you'll want to make sure that all light switches are placed close to the door. Bulbs, cords, and light fixtures must also be repaired or replaced immediately when needed.

5. Require Proper Footwear

Whether you work in an office, an automotive shop, or on construction sites, proper footwear is crucial to preventing slips, trips, and falls. Some industries require or even provide specialized footwear as part of the uniform code, but not all.

If safety shoes aren't required, employees still need to consider their footwear. The soles should be non-slip and in good shape, able to provide sufficient traction. If heels are often worn, ensure that the shoes won't get caught on the edge of a rug or other uneven surface. Be sure all shoelaces are the proper length for the shoe and properly tied so they cannot become a tripping hazard.

Accidents can happen anywhere, but by taking proactive safety steps, many workplace injuries involving slips, trips and falls can be prevented. Never go where your eyes have not already been by scanning the area for slip, trip and fall hazards!

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Housekeeping at work is as important as it is at home, especially if you want a safe workplace. People who must function every day in a messy, disorderly work environment have lower morale, although they may not be aware of the cause. But the safety ramifications of poor housekeeping in the workplace are even more important. Poor housekeeping may result in employee injuries or even death. How can such a seemingly "minor" issue such as housekeeping have such serious consequences?

Poor housekeeping practices can result in:

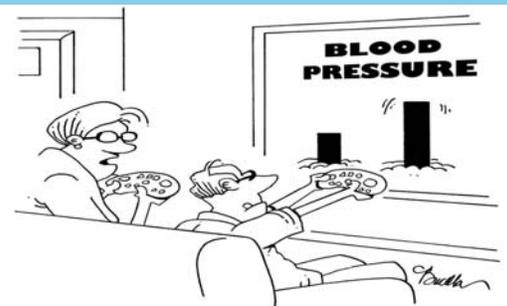
- Injuries when employees trip over, strike or are struck by out-of-place objects.
- Injuries from using improper tools because the correct tool can't be found.
- Lowered production because of the time spent maneuvering over and around someone else's mess and time spent looking for proper tools and materials.

Remember: If you are complacent about safe housekeeping, employees may become desensitized to poor practices and become unable to identify hazards, putting them at risk of injury.

General housekeeping rules to remember: Housekeeping is everyone's responsibility!

- Clean up after yourself. Pick up trash and debris and dispose of it properly. Keep your work area clean throughout the day, minimizing the time needed to clean a larger mess at the end of the day.
- Dispose of combustibles and flammables properly. If improperly discarded, they will increase the potential for a fire.
- Remove protruding nails and other sharp objects or hammer them flat to prevent someone from being injured by them.
- Stack materials and supplies in an orderly manner and secure them so they won't topple.
- Report all slips, trips and falls, with or without injury, so the hazard can be corrected.
- Remove any cords or cables in walking areas.
- Organize cables under desks.

If you value your health, safety and work reputation you will practice these general housekeeping rules. A well-kept workplace shows respect for those who work there. Help keep it that way!



"Relax. It's like golf. Low score wins."

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

1. Born in an instant, I tell all stories. I can be lost, but I never die. What am I?
 2. What is made of water, but if you put it into water will die?
 3. I live in the winter but I die in the summer. My roots grow upward. What am I?
 4. What can you hear but not touch or see?
- Answers on Page 2

Back to School = Slow Down + Share the Road

School days bring congestion: School buses are picking up their passengers, kids on bikes are hurrying to get to school before the bell rings, harried parents are trying to drop their kids off before work. It's never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when kids are present – especially before and after school.

If You're Dropping Off

Schools often have very specific drop-off procedures for the school year. Make sure you know them for the safety of all kids. The following apply to all school zones:

- Don't double park; it blocks visibility for other children and vehicles
- Don't load or unload children across the street from the school
- Carpool to reduce the number of vehicles at the school

Sharing the Road with Young Pedestrians

According to research by the National Safety Council, most of the children who lose their lives in bus-related incidents are 4 to 7 years old, and they're walking. They are hit by the bus, or by a motorist illegally passing a stopped bus. A few precautions go a long way toward keeping children safe:

- Don't block the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or waiting to make a turn, forcing pedestrians to go around you; this could put them in the path of moving traffic
- In a school zone when flashers are blinking, stop and yield to pedestrians crossing the crosswalk or intersection
- Always stop for a school patrol officer or crossing guard holding up a stop sign
- Take extra care to look out for children in school zones, near playgrounds and parks, and in all residential areas
- Don't honk or rev your engine to scare a pedestrian, even if you have the right of way
- Never pass a vehicle stopped for pedestrians
- Always use extreme caution to avoid striking pedestrians wherever they may be, no matter who has the right of way

Sharing the Road with School Buses

If you're driving behind a bus, allow a greater following distance than if you were driving behind a car. It will give you more time to stop once the yellow lights start flashing. It is illegal in all 50 states to pass a school bus that is stopped to load or unload children.

- Never pass a bus from behind – or from either direction if you're on an undivided road – if it is stopped to load or unload children
- If the yellow or red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, traffic must stop
- The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children; stop far enough back to allow them space to safely enter and exit the bus
- Be alert; children often are unpredictable, and they tend to ignore hazards and take risks

Sharing the Road with Bicyclists

On most roads, bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as vehicles, but bikes can be hard to see. Children riding bikes create special problems for drivers because usually they are not able to properly determine traffic conditions. The most common cause of collision is a driver turning left in front of a bicyclist.

- When passing a bicyclist, proceed in the same direction slowly, and leave 3 feet between your car and the cyclist
- When turning left and a bicyclist is approaching in the opposite direction, wait for the rider to pass
- If you're turning right and a bicyclist is approaching from behind on the right, let the rider go through the intersection first, and always use your turn signals
- Watch for bike riders turning in front of you without looking or signaling; children especially have a tendency to do this
- Be extra vigilant in school zones and residential neighborhoods
- Watch for bikes coming from driveways or behind parked cars
- Check side mirrors before opening your door

By exercising a little extra care and caution, drivers and pedestrians can co-exist safely in school zones.



QUOTATION OF THE MONTH



SAFETY TIPS OF THE MONTH

The following are outdoor grill safety tips:

• Check to see if your grill has been recalled. You can go to SaferProducts.gov. If your grill has been recalled stop using it until it is properly repaired or replaced.

• Be sure your grill is placed on even ground and well balanced and keep away from the home, deck, railings, eaves and tree branches. Use grills outside only. Never use a grill indoors or in a breezeway, carport, porch, garage or near or under a surface that will burn.

• Inspect the hoses on a gas grill for cracking, brittleness, holes and leaks. Make sure there are no sharp bends in the hose or tubing and that all connections are secure. Replace if necessary. Keep the grill hoses as far away as possible from hot surfaces and dripping hot grease.

• Check for gas leaks. Brush a soapy solution at the connection. If bubbles appear there is a leak. Try tightening the tank. If that does not stop the leak, close the gas valve and have the grill repaired by a professional.

• Is the grill clean? Regularly cleaning the grill will reduce the risk of flare-ups and grease fires. Check your owner's manual for details on grill cleaning and cleaning the grease trap.

• Never leave a grill unattended. If a flare-up occurs, adjust the controls on the gas grill or spread out the coals on a charcoal grill to lower the temperature. If a grease fire occurs, turn off the gas grill and use baking soda and or a kitchen fire extinguisher to put out the fire. Use long handled cooking utensils to prevent burns from flare ups.

• Outside surfaces of a grill can get extremely hot and burn when touched. Keep children and pets away from the grill area. Also keep your grill away from play areas and high foot traffic areas.



"This may sound stupid, but why can't they make a prescription drug with good side effects?"

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS

1. Memories
2. Ice
3. An icicle
4. Your voice!