

# SLIPS, TRIPS, & FALLS FOR CUSTODIAL STAFF

## Why is prevention of slips, trips and falls important?

In Canada, some sixty thousand workers get injured annually due to fall accidents. This number represents about fifteen percent of the "time-loss injuries" that were accepted by workers' compensation boards or commissions across Canada. Not mentioning a great economical loss, it amounts for a lot of pain and suffering and sometimes (*much too often*) even death. All these, in most cases, do not have to happen.

What is needed is:

- understanding how fall accidents happen.
- identifying the trouble areas eliminating or minimizing hazards of falling.

## How do falls happen?

Statistics show that the majority (60 percent) of falls happen on the same level and result in slips and trips. The remaining 40 percent are falls from a height. Falls from an elevation—such as ladders, roofs, down stairs or from jumping to a lower level, etc.—will be discussed in another document since each type of fall requires different features in a fall prevention program.

## Slips

- Wet or oily surfaces
- Occasional spills
- Weather hazards
- Loose, unanchored rugs or mats, and 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 the balance and eventually fall. Common causes of tripping are:

- Obstructed view.
- Poor lighting.
- Clutter in your way.
- Wrinkled carpeting.
- Uncovered cables.
- Bottom drawers not being closed, and uneven (*steps, thresholds*) walking surfaces.



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

### 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 by replacing used light bulbs and faulty switches.

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



### Flooring

Changing or modifying walking surfaces is the next level of preventing slip and trips. Recoating or replacing floors, installing mats, pressure-sensitive abrasive strips or abrasive-filled paint-on coating and metal or synthetic decking can further improve safety and reduce risk of falling. However, it is critical to remember that high-tech flooring requires good housekeeping as much as any other flooring. In addition, resilient, non-slippery flooring prevents or reduces foot fatigue and contributes to slip prevention measures.

### Footwear

In workplaces where floors may be oily or wet or where workers spend considerable time outdoors, prevention of fall accidents should focus on selecting proper footwear. Since there is no footwear with anti-slip properties for every condition, consultation with manufacturers is highly recommended.

Properly fitting footwear increases com-

