

# Falls on the Same Level

Slips, trips, and falls can occur on the same level, not just from a height. Learn more about these falls and how to avoid them on the jobsite.

## Falls on the Same Level

One of the most common and costly jobsite injuries each year are falls on the same level. Workers slip or trip on the surface they are walking on and fall to the same level, resulting in injury. Not to be taken lightly, injuries from falls to the same level can be serious, including head injuries, broken bones, torn ligaments, and sometimes permanent disability.

Now, we'll discuss common causes of trips and slips on the jobsite, as well as best practices for fall prevention.

### What is a trip?

Trips are caused by accidental contact with an obstacle when walking, causing a loss of balance which typically results in a fall.

Trips are not only caused by objects or hazards at the floor level. Objects at eye level, swinging doors, and structures like columns and posts or fixtures and furniture are common culprits as well.

The resulting fall from a trip can cause injuries ranging from minor to major, leading to:

- Lost revenue
- Increased sick time
- Lost wages
- Higher insurance premiums
- Disability
- Decreased production

Both the injured employee and their employer stand to lose a great deal as the result of trips and falls.

### What is a slip?

Slips refer to workers losing their footing. These occurrences stem from a loss of traction, unlevel surfaces, and improper surfaces for footing.

Like trips, a loss of balance occurs when a worker slips, and the individual who slipped typically winds up on the floor. Common causes of slips are:

- Slick surfaces
- Improper footwear
- Spills
- Underfoot debris
- Sudden stops
- Declining grade surfaces

Injuries from slips to the same level range from minor to major as well, and unfortunately slips open the employee and employer to the same potential risks as trips.

Luckily, a high percentage of trips and slips are preventable.

## **Slip and trip fall safety and good housekeeping**

Maintaining a clean, uncluttered jobsite is paramount for promoting safety and decreasing incidences of [slips or trips](#). Jobsites are dynamic places, with often chaotic amounts of noise and activity, so it is everyone's responsibility to be aware of slip and trip hazards and take corrective action.

### **Keep pathways clear**

Oftentimes people slip or trip while avoiding objects in their path. Pathways at job sites are high traffic areas full of potential obstacles like cables and hoses. If cables or hoses will be in a pathway for any extended period, be sure to tape them to the surface with a bright, noticeable color of tape to keep them from rolling underfoot and make sure they are highly visible.

Try not to stack anything in a pathway. Sometimes bulky items are stacked in pathways "temporarily" for later use. This is dangerous and could easily lead to trips or slips, especially if the items are not at eye level.

### **Clean up spills immediately**

Spills are some of the most common jobsite hazards when they are on a walking surface. Maintaining good traction is more important, so clean up any liquids or debris that spills immediately.

### **Designate areas for scrap and trash**

Many times on jobsites, a common practice is "where it lands is where it stays". However, this is risky behavior.

If it is not being used, all scrap material and supply materials should be moved to designated storage spaces or containers away from high traffic areas.

Everything has its place even on the construction site or in the warehouse, including tools, materials, supplies, trash. If it is not being used, put it in its proper place. Containers get kicked, buckets get knocked over, and people walk into or trip over things that someone else left in the way every day. Safety protocol requires storing items and equipment where they belong when not in use.

### **Regular times for safety checks daily**

Schedule [regular safety inspections](#) throughout the workday. Have a team leader or supervisor designate regular times of the day where work stops for a few minutes and the focus for everyone on site is to check and correct all possible safety issues.

It is human nature to focus on the task at hand, particularly in construction and industrial fields. Taking a mental break to shift the focus to safety decreases the risk of trips and slips.

### **Trip and slip fall safety with best lighting**

It's easy to trip or slip and fall when you can't see properly. Jobsite lighting issues pose a risk, including:

- Too little light
- Too much glare
- Shadows
- Distance
- Focus
- Burned out bulbs

Here are some recommendations for properly lighting the jobsite and improving workers' ability to see possible slip and trip hazards.

### **Use diffuse lighting**

Direct lighting focused on an area can cause shadows outside of the area. Eyes will need to adjust when people move from being in or out of the light.

Diffuse lighting removes that issue and cuts down on glare from reflective surfaces. With diffuse lighting, you can bridge the gap between too much or too little light for a workspace.

### **Always turn on the light**

Never go into a dim or dark area without lighting.. Even during the light of high noon, enclosed spaces like crawlspaces and attics can be pitch black, so keep a torch or modern flashlight handy.

Many times people get in a rush and zip into a darkened space just for a second to grab something and end up tripping or slipping on something they were not able to see.

### **Maintain your lighting equipment**

The worst time to find out your equipment does not work is right when you plan to use it. Keep spare light bulbs close by and check your cable connections.

If lighting equipment malfunctions creating an unsafe jobsite, choose the cautious path and stand by or reschedule until the equipment is restored.

### **Grip tape is not just for your hands**

Grip tape was developed for walking on slick surfaces and skateboarders who wanted more traction on their boards. It is a genius combination of sandpaper with adhesive on the other side that conforms to a multitude of shapes.

Grip tape is an economical temporary solution in an area with a high risk of slips. It's as easy to apply as duct tape and turns smooth surfaces into non-skid surfaces.

### **Most slips and trips are preventable**

Taking a proactive approach by using some or all of the best practices we have discussed will benefit everyone involved.

While they may seem simple and innocuous on the surface, trip and slip injuries are one of the most common and impactful workplace injuries affecting employees and organizations today.