

"For safety's sake—do something."

Slips, Trips, and Falls in Construction

Nearly one-third of reportable injuries and 40% of fatalities in construction result from slips, trips, and falls (STF). These injuries result in 50% more days away from work than other injuries. Let's take a look at some common areas of risk and some safe work practices.

Risk Areas and Regular Housekeeping

On-going housekeeping and regular inspections with safety in mind is necessary, so that working surfaces are free of STF hazards that may result in injury to employees. Having loose debris on the floor during construction activities can increase the risk for falls. **Take 5** for safety; assess your work area, and stop construction to clean up areas that need it (don't wait).

- **Walkways:** Seasonal changes in temperature, along with regular wear and tear, can deteriorate the condition of outdoor walkways, so these areas should be inspected regularly to identify the ruts, slippery conditions, and other uneven ground on the worksite. Also, identify holes and trenches on the site. OSHA defines a hole as a gap, or void, two inches or more in its least dimension, in a floor, roof, or other walking / working surface. Cover them and rope them off with caution tape to prevent access to the area. For trip and fall hazards that can't be immediately resolved, ensure there are adequate barricades and warning signs in place.
- **Floors:** Floors should be kept clean and free of water, oil, and grease. Tiled or concrete floors can be etched to provide a non-slip, non-skid surface. Smooth flooring also can be covered with skid-resistant materials to improve traction. Protect employees with options to ensure their footwear is dry for the conditions.
- **Stairwells and steps:** Stairwells and steps should be well lit, and sturdy railings should be provided along both sides when possible. Steps should not be dangerously steep and should have the same rise and depth with visible edges. Keep stairs and stairwells free of grease, ice, snow, boxes, and other obstacles that could cause slips or trips.
- **Lighting:** Reduce the risk of slips and falls by using proper indoor and outdoor lighting. Outdoor stairs, walkways, and parking lots should be well lit. Conduct regular lighting inspections of the construction site and replace burned-out bulbs immediately. Ensure adequate outdoor lighting as the seasons change and it gets dark earlier and stays dark longer.
- **Material storage:** All materials should be stored away from walkways and should not block doors or exits. Be sure that items are not impeding the flow of people. Ensure that items are not stacked so high that they become hazardous. OSHA has requirements for some special types of materials and how they are to be stored.



Seasonal Hazards

Walkways, ladders, and work platforms present seasonal slip-and-fall hazards due to snow, ice, and rain. It's important to evaluate your equipment and employee needs before each new season begins. For example, ensure a plan is in place to handle snow- and ice-removal emergencies, and stock up on salt and shovels before the winter season. Clear snow and ice from emergency exits, outdoor staircases, walkways, and parking lots as soon as possible. Evaluate downspouts to ensure runoff does not form ice buildup on sidewalks or parking areas. Have ways for employees to clean their footwear to ensure they are dry, mud is removed and ice / snow has not built up.

*Together, we all must look out for ourselves, and others,
to ensure we are safe at work.*

Be a safety champion and remember,

**"Safety always is
ALWAYS!"**