



Winter – Slips, Trips and Fall Season

Winter in Alaska presents some very challenging environments to cope with: the build up of snow and ice on the roads, parking lots, sidewalks and entryways. Because of this, slip, trip and fall accidents are among the most common types of accidents resulting in injuries to Soldiers and civilian workers. Slips and trips result in falls and can cause very serious injuries such as severe head injuries, back injuries, paralysis, broken bones, strained or sprained muscles and joints, lacerations, and even death. Most injuries occur from falls on the same level or on stairs, rather than falls from one level to another. In Alaska, it doesn't matter whether you work outdoors or in an office environment, at some point in the day you will encounter icy road conditions, icy parking lots, icy sidewalks and entryways during your transition to and from work. To prevent injury of your employees, or to yourself, you need to be concerned about preventing slip, trip and fall accidents.

Slips – Slips occur when there is too little friction or traction between the footwear and the walking surface, and often results in a fall. Some common causes of slips are:

- Ice, snow, or mud
- Wet walking surfaces
- Footwear that is not appropriate for the walking surfaces
- Unanchored rugs or mats
- Oil or other slippery material on the floor
- Highly polished floors or smooth floor coatings

Trips—Trips occur when a person's foot contacts an object or drops to a lower level unexpectedly and throws the person off balance. Trips also often result in a fall. Some of the more common causes of tripping are:

- Cords and hoses on the floor
- Uneven or damaged walking surfaces
- Frayed, wrinkled or torn carpeting
- Debris, materials, tools, etc. left in aisles and other walking areas
- Poor lighting

How to Prevent Slips Trips and Falls.

Since slips and trips are caused by a wide variety of hazards and often result in falls, prevention requires a multifaceted approach that addresses walking and working surfaces, maintenance, housekeeping and storage practices, work practices, footwear requirements, and employee education and awareness. There is a general tendency to blame an employee who slips or trips for “not being careful” or “not watching where they were going.” While some slips and trips can be avoided if the person is aware of the hazard and is alert to the danger, the fact is that most slip and trip accidents could have been avoided by eliminating the hazard in the first place. Here are a few steps to reduce or eliminate slip and trip accidents:

1. Conduct regular self-inspections of facilities to identify slip and trip hazards and eliminate them.
2. Have a program in place for ice and snow removal so hazards are removed or treated before employees arrive. After removal, salt and sand the icy surfaces.
3. Require employees to wear shoes with soles that are appropriate for the walking surfaces. When traveling to and from icy parking lots, wear footwear with appropriate soles and use ice spikes on the footwear.
4. Educate employees to know which areas of the workplace present potential slip and fall hazards, the proper footwear to wear for the hazards, to slow down and adjust their stride to a pace suitable for the walking surface and conditions, what to do if they find a potential slip or trip hazard, and to be sure that items they are carrying don't obstruct their view of potential slip or trip hazards in their path.
5. Require employees to keep work areas, aisles, stairways and other walking and working surfaces clean and free of liquids, scraps, materials, cords, hoses and other slip and trip hazards.

6. Replace smooth floor coatings with slip-resistant surfaces such as brushed concrete, carpeting or other less slippery flooring. If a polished surface is necessary, use anti-slip waxes or add mats or carpeting in high traffic walking areas and near entrances to prevent tracked in water or mud.
7. Provide handrails on stairs, steps and ramps.
8. Provide adequate lighting in all walking and working areas and stairways.
9. Make sure that there is a difference in color between floor or step levels, especially where there is only one step down, or put a contrasting color on the edge of the change in floor level so that people can see that there is a step or drop down. Adding a railing also alerts people that there is a step down. Signs also can be posted, but they are not as effective as visual cues.
10. Investigate all slip and trip accidents, even those in which no injuries occur, and take steps to prevent recurrences. If you know what to look for and take action, slips and trips can be prevented. If you don't, the result can be a costly lost-time injury, or worse.



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