

Top Tips: Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls at Work

Did you know that Nova Scotia has, on average, 3,477* slip, trip and fall claims each year? Slips, trips and falls are a major cause of costly and serious workplace injuries: The average cost of all benefits for time-loss claims related to slips, trips and falls has been \$10,411 for the past five years.*

What can you do to help prevent slip, trip and fall injuries in the workplace? Here are tips to consider as part of your regular inspection process.

Inside “Watch Outs”

- Wet or waxed floors** – Do not wait for a small spill to dry itself. Make sure you clean up spills immediately or post appropriate signage to make others aware of the hazard and report it to someone who can correct it.
- Carpets** – Make sure all rugs and carpets are free of wrinkles, are not frayed, and are properly tacked down or equipped with nonskid mats.
- Electrical cords and cables** – Watch for loose cords and cables that are placed across walking paths. Reroute the cord/cable so it doesn't cross a travel path, or, as a last resort, use an appropriate protector for electrical cords.
- Loose flooring** – Watch for loose tiles, bricks, pavement, or floorboards. Remove or replace loose flooring, put up barriers to prevent people from walking over damaged flooring, or, as a last resort, post appropriate signage to make others aware of the hazard.
- Oil or grease on floors** – Monitor equipment that may generate oil or grease spills. Have rags, an oil absorbent product (e.g., kitty litter) and detergent ready whenever you use oily materials. Do not let grease or oil accumulate on the floor.
- Untidy floors** – Do a visual sweep of walking areas for debris. Pick up or remove any loose items. Even a small object on the floor can cause a trip and fall.
- Drawers** – Watch for open drawers in office areas. Keep them closed.
- Tools and equipment** – Tools or equipment not stored properly may create tripping hazards. Ensure tools and equipment are stored in designated areas away from walking paths.
- Lighting** – Make sure stairways and hallways are well lit. Replace burnt out lights. Use a flashlight if you enter a dark room where there is no light.
- Stairs** – Promote the use of handrails with signage when travelling on stairs. Treads on stairs, especially the front edge, must be maintained. The risk of falling increases if the height of each step in a flight of stairs is not consistent.



* Calculation is based on WCB Nova Scotia data from 2010 to 2014.

Inside “Watch Outs” continued

- Footwear** – Select footwear for employees that is appropriate for the work environment. Annual footwear inspections help ensure that footwear has the proper tread and is appropriate for the work environment.
- Manageable loads** – Carry only what you can handle. Make sure you can see clearly over the load you are carrying. Take your time and make multiple trips if necessary. Do not carry loads that require two hands when travelling up or down stairs, steps, or ladders.
- “Makeshift ladders”** – Do not use furniture or boxes as a makeshift ladder. Use a Grade 1 or 2 sturdy, balanced stepladder or a step stool made specifically for that purpose.
- Clothing** – Hems and cuffs should be short enough so that you do not catch a heel while walking or get hooked when walking.

Outside “Watch Outs”

- Three points of contact** – When entering or exiting vehicles or equipment, maintain three points of contact at all times (both hands and one foot or both feet and one hand) to minimize the chance of slipping and falling.
- Outside lighting** – Make adjustments based on the season. Outside lighting that is operated on timers should be adjusted for the season and/or time change.
- Footwear** – Ensure you have proper footwear for the elements. Fashion does not trump safety.
- Slippery or uneven walking surfaces** – Reduce the risk posed by slippery or uneven surfaces by filling in, cordoning off, covering the area, or using high friction coatings. If this isn’t possible, take more care when walking on these surfaces.
- Snow and ice** – Prior to the winter months, ensure plans are in place to remove snow and ice and apply salt or sand as needed. Pay close attention to areas that drain poorly or accumulate snow.
- Weather** – Pay attention to the weather forecast and be aware of the additional risk associated with rain, snow and black ice. To improve traction in icy conditions, ice cleats can be worn while working outdoors and removed for indoor activities.
- Steps and walkways** – Monitor stairs and walkways for snow and ice buildup and put measures in place to clear and salt/sand as needed. Promote the use of handrails with signage when travelling on steps.
- Tools and debris** – Poor housekeeping can happen even outside. Gather up and remove debris to keep the worksite clean and clear. Plan for the appropriate disposal of scrap, waste and surplus materials to eliminate tripping hazards. Store tools properly when not in use.
- Hoses and power cords** – Keep hoses and power cords from lying in walkways.



Safety First

By working together to identify the hazards and putting proper control measures in place we can reduce the number of slip, trip and fall injuries in our workplaces. For more information and resources, visit our website at: worksafeforlife.ca/slips-falls. Do your part so we can all go home safely at the end of the day to what matters most.