

Slip, trip and fall assessment guide

The framework to evaluate and assess the potential risks



Slips, trips and falls

How safe are your floors?

How about your stairs?

Have people fallen recently?

You are not alone if you have had slips, trips and falls in your facility.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in 2016 there were 229,240 slip, trip and fall injuries involving days away from work.¹ The most common injuries are joint injuries, typically to the wrist, elbow, shoulder and knee. Back injuries also occur often. These types of injuries affect every aspect of your business, from employees to contractors, visitors and the public.



Advantages of assessing your risks for slips, trips and falls

Slips, trips and falls are among the greatest workers' compensation and general liability exposures. Two of the most common causes for slips and falls are slippery and uneven walking surfaces. It is important to take the time to evaluate every area of your facility and find where these risks could arise, specifically high-traffic areas. This assessment guide can help you evaluate and analyze these areas to establish an action plan.

Best practices for high-traffic areas

1. Stairs should be in good condition, of equal height and well lit. Stairs with three or more steps should be equipped with a handrail.
2. Curbs should be highlighted to warn of the height change.
3. Exterior lighting should be checked to make sure it is adequate and frequently inspected for malfunctioning fixtures.
4. Lot surfaces should be in good condition, free of holes and other obstructions.
5. A self-inspection program to identify hazards and assure repairs are made promptly should be implemented and documented.
6. Downspouts that empty onto walkways should be redirected to avoid slip hazards.
7. Floor spills should never be left unattended and should be cleaned immediately with a posted "Caution – Wet Floor" sign.
8. An oil-absorbing material should be available for oil spills.
9. All entrances should have mats or rugs to keep floors clean and dry.
10. Entrances, aisles and hallways should be free of obstructions.

Additional slip, trip and fall questions

Zurich has identified ten main contributing factors for evaluating slip, trip and fall risks. Depending on the type of facility being evaluated, not all of these contributing factors may apply. As you review the contributing factor guide in the next section, keep these additional questions in mind to help assess how each factor applies to your facility:

General

- Are handrails and guardrails secured and constructed to safety standards?
- Are slip-retardant floors present?
- What type of footwear is typically worn around the facility?
- Do entrance mats adequately cover the entryway into the facility? Are they in good condition?
- Are ladders and step stools inspected regularly?

Sidewalks and parking lots

- Are sidewalks free of holes, broken or cracked?
- Are exterior surfaces illuminated with good lighting?
- Are unsafe conditions reported immediately?

Employees

- Are employees reminded often to pay attention to where they are walking (e.g., slippery floors, through clutter, or on loose or worn carpeting)?
- Do employees report unsafe conditions when they observe them?
- Are employees instructed on proper use of floor cleaners and safe mopping techniques?
- Do employees pick up paper/debris and wipe up spills from floors?
- Are employees instructed on how to carefully ascend and descend from ladders?

Good housekeeping

- Are hallways and stairs clutter-free and cleaned regularly?
- Are wet floor signs regularly posted properly?
- Are mop heads frequently changed and cleaned on a regular basis?

Restrooms

- Is adequate lighting available?
- Is adequate drainage available?
- Are leaky toilets and water fixtures promptly repaired?
- Are restrooms inspected regularly?



Slip, trip and fall evaluation form

Site name: _____

Address: _____

Surveyed by: _____ Date: _____

Score contributing factor in each column:

4 = High potential

3 = Medium potential

2 = Low potential

1 = Very low potential

If factor not applicable, leave blank.

Calculate area score:

Add up actual score and divide by total possible score. Convert to percent.

Areas evaluated	Foreign substance potential Surface composition	Surface conditions Surface substance potential	Surface changes	Level changes	Obstructions	Stairs - elevators/escalators Visibility	Human factors	Unusual features	Area score
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
7.									
8.									
9.									
10.									
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23.									
24.									
25.									

Calculate OVERALL SCORE by totaling area scores, and then dividing by number of areas surveyed.

Overall score: _____

To consider which areas pose the greatest slip, trip and fall potential and need to be addressed first, rank the area scores in DESCENDING order, focusing improvement efforts on areas with the HIGHEST scores. While the goal would be to have all contributing factors rated a "1" (very low potential), any contributing factor rated a "4" (high potential) needs to be improved.

Contributing factor guide

In order to assist you in evaluating risks in your facility using our evaluation form, we have developed the following guide of 10 common contributing factors. When assessing an area, you will be evaluating each contributing factor to determine whether it contributes to a very low (1), low (2), medium (3) or high (4) potential for a slip, trip and fall incident. The descriptions listed in the scoring columns are some common examples for each contributing factor, but you should also reference the additional questions in the previous section and incorporate your own observations, experiences and knowledge of your facility. Use the slip, trip and fall evaluation form provided above to record the scores for your facility.

	High potential (Score = 4)	Medium potential (Score = 3)	Low potential (Score = 2)	Very low potential (Score = 1)
Surface composition	Highly polished and smooth surface (e.g., polished marble)	Adequate traction, but reduced when wet (e.g., smooth concrete)	Adequate traction, slightly reduced when wet (e.g., untreated wood)	Adequate traction conditions (e.g., carpet)
Foreign substance potential	Surface contaminants are likely present (e.g., water)	Surface contaminants are occasionally present (e.g., spills)	Surface contaminants are rare (e.g., beverage spills)	Surfaces have no potential for contaminants
Surface condition	Worn mats, holes, cracks	Broken tiles, ripped carpet	Worn carpeting, cracked tile	No deficiencies
Surface changes	Carpet to marble	Carpet to tile	Pavement to gravel	No change
Level changes	Slope greater than a step	Step up or step down	Bumps and subtle level changes	Level
Obstructions	Obstacles located in walkway (i.e., people need to step around or over objects)	Obstacles in walkway, but guarded (e.g., extension cords)	No obstacles directly in walkway (e.g., planters)	None
Visibility	No contrast level changes, very low light	Contrast in colors and low light	Contrast in colors and adequate lighting	No exposure
Human factors	High percentage of elderly or disabled patients/residents/customers	Improper footwear worn by employees	Employees wearing appropriate footwear	No high-risk traffic expected
Stairs (includes any elevators and escalators)	Frequently used stairs, step ladders or uneven treads	Stairs used by a few personnel to limited areas	Stairs seldom used and maintained	No stairs or emergency only
Unusual features	Children's play area, outside garden with fountains	Temporary displays/signage, seasonal decorations	Permanent signage	No distracting features

Note: There may be times when a specific contributing factor does not apply. When this occurs, the contributing factor is to be omitted from the scoring process.

Action plan



Developing an action plan is critical for reducing risks for slips, trips and falls. Not only will you need to make changes to areas with potential for risks, but you will also need to put administrative policies in place to make sure everyone knows the proper procedures.

The final step in the assessment program is to determine how to control the slip, trip and fall risks you have identified. Use the slip, trip and fall action plan worksheet provided below for each issue that is a high risk. Based on the contributing factor scores for each area, you have determined your priorities and know which issue to work on first, but each issue is unique and requires careful consideration of what level of control is desirable, what resources are available and what is technically feasible. Because of these differences, action plans to control each different exposure in a particular area of your facility will also be unique. You will probably find that in most cases, more than one change is needed to affect a long-term solution to the problem.

Here are some suggestions for possible controls to get you started:

Physical changes

- Repair deficiencies in floor surfaces and railings.
- Replace slick floor material with surfaces having a higher coefficient of friction.
- Use floor dressings that reduce slipperiness.
- Install grab bars and rails where appropriate.
- Avoid furnishings that might slip when leaned upon.
- Apply slip-resistant coatings in showers, baths and bathroom floors.
- Use color contrasts to make steps or other level changes more visible.
- Make sure all floor surfaces are adequately lit at night.

Administrative changes

- Ensure supervisors and staff are aware of their responsibilities for fall prevention.
- Identify and flag guests who are at high risk for a fall so the staff is aware of this.
- Schedule and monitor preventive maintenance on rolling equipment.
- Cover fall prevention topics often during employee training.
- Include fall prevention items on routine self-inspection forms.
- Ensure corrective action follow-up by management.

Slip, trip and fall – action plan worksheet

Site name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Created by: _____ Title: _____

Slip, trip and fall prevention item number: _____

Describe issue needing corrective action:

Describe physical changes needed to improve the condition:

Describe administrative changes needed to improve the condition:

Management/team member/property manager responsible for corrective actions

Name: _____ Title: _____

Target date for completion: _____ Date completed: _____

Miscellaneous comments/information:

References

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data extracted 18 June 2018.

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