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Slips, Trips, and Falls

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Slips, trips and falls are the number one reason for industrial injuries in the United States. Now that the weather has turned cold and winter has arrived, slips, trips, and falls can become even more of a hazard. Simple everyday tasks such as walking from our vehicle to our work area are now a hazard that we must be aware of and take precautions against.

Here are a few tips to help keep us on our feet and not our backside on those cold and snowy days:

- Plan ahead and give yourself sufficient time.
- Always use the hand railings and plant your feet firmly on each step when using stairs.
- If walkway is icy or snow-covered, take short steps and walk at a slower pace so you can react quickly to a change in traction.
- Bend knees a little and take slower and shorter steps. This will help increase traction and can greatly reduce the chances of falling. It also helps to stop occasionally to break momentum.
- Streets and sidewalks that have been cleared of snow and ice should still be approached with caution. Watch for black ice. Dew, fog, or water vapor can freeze on cold surfaces and form an extra-thin, nearly invisible layer of ice that can look like a wet spot on the pavement.
- Carrying heavy items can challenge your sense of balance. Try not to carry too much to keep your hands and arms free for better balance.
- Be prepared to fall and try to avoid using your arms to break your fall. If you fall backwards, make a conscious effort to tuck your chin so your head doesn't strike the ground with a full force.
- When entering a building, remove as much snow and water from your boots as you can.
- Use special care when entering and exiting vehicles. Use the vehicle for support.

According to OSHA 1910.22(a)(2) "The floor of every workroom shall be maintained in a clean and, so far as possible, a dry condition." This is not always possible at IPSC due to washing down the buildings, plugged drains, and spills. Wet floors are a hazard that we work hard to manage, but at times the hazard is still there. Take special care when walking around or through these hazards. In the past there have been

a couple of slips due to the weather as well as from material on the floor. One fall turned into a lost time accident while the other was a mild tweak of the back. Both incidents happened while the employees were performing routine tasks that have been done hundreds of times without any incident.

Here are a few ways to help prevent slips, trips, and falls at work:

- Pay attention to movements and surroundings.
- Focus on where you're going, what you're doing, and what lies ahead.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Take responsibility for fixing, removing, or avoiding hazards in your path.
- Wear sturdy shoes with nonskid soles and flat heels.
- Avoid baggy or loose pants that could be tripped over.
- Walk. Don't run.
- Wipe feet when coming in from rain or snow.
- Report or replace any burned out lights or inadequate lighting.
- Watch out for floors that are uneven, have holes, etc.
- Keep your hands at your sides, not in your pockets, for balance.
- Don't carry loads that block your vision.
- Walk slowly on slippery surfaces.

Slips, trips, and falls can take less than a second to happen, but the impact that they can have can last a lifetime. Please be sure to follow these few simple steps that have been listed above and save yourself a lifetime of dealing with the aches and pains that can come from a simple slip, trip, or fall.

Source:
Toolboxsafety.com

