

Workplace Safety

Industrial Workplace Hazards Part II: Preventing Trips

Brought To You by Wearwell | Nov 25, 2020

One could state that avoiding trip hazards in the industrial workplace is easy. Keep walk areas clear. Simple enough. Although if it were that easy, **20% of all job-related injuries would not be attributed to slips, trips or falls**. There is the old adage “Watch where you’re going”!

So why is this percentage so high? The response from the injured “I didn’t see...”, “I wasn’t thinking...,” it could be their eyes or mind were not on task, which is definitely a factor in the accident. If they had been watching or thinking about where they were going, they would have seen the object they tripped over.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cannot control the mind of the individuals—we all have times where our minds are pre-occupied—but does have some general requirements for walking-working surfaces.

To prevent workplace trips, OSHA requires employers to ensure:

- All places of employment, passageways, storerooms, service rooms, and walking-working surfaces are regularly inspected, maintained, and kept in a clean, orderly, sanitary and safe condition **(1910.22(a)(3))**.
- That hazardous conditions on walking-working surfaces are corrected or repaired before an employee uses the walking-working surface again. If the correction or repair cannot be made immediately, the hazard must be guarded to prevent employees from using the walking-working surface until the hazard is corrected or repaired. **(1910.22(d)(2))**.

Above following OSHA rules, **the following visual cues can be added for the reduction of accidental workplace trips:**

- **Brightly outlined mats** or tapes help to identify objects that are lower than standard peripheral vision and colors blend into their surrounding surface.
- Reflective signs with warning symbols can also help.
- Ramps that are additionally contrasting in color can be installed to indicate change in floor elevation.

The visual indicators of contrast cause a change that the eye picks up on, sending signals to the brain that bring one's thoughts back to mind on the task at hand.

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