



Workplace Safety

## Preventing Workplace Slips

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Slips can happen anywhere in your facility, resulting in injury, permanent disability and even death. The costs to both the employer and the worker can be substantial.

*The National Floor Safety Institute* reports that workplace slips and falls do not constitute a primary cause of fatal occupational injuries, but represent the primary cause of lost days from work. Additionally, slips are one of the leading causes for workers' compensation claims, and are on the rise, due to migrating contaminants that are making concrete floors more slippery.

The *Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)* has outlined relatively new safety regulations for flooring. Although OSHA's current standard 1910.22 was published in 1971, there is a provision — 1910.22(a)(2) — that requires employers to maintain floors "in a clean and, so far as possible, dry condition."

In 2010, OSHA proposed a *Walking-Working Surfaces and Personal Protective Equipment* rule, which has kept the same language. This proposed rule, according to OSHA, was to prevent slips, trips, falls and other hazards.

"OSHA proposed the rule (75 FR 28862) in 2010, but no final rule has been published," says an OSHA spokesperson. "The proposal does not require employers to have a qualified person on hand to regularly inspect floors and implement cleaning/maintenance programs. The proposal requires that 'where hazardous conditions may affect the structural integrity of the walking-working surface, a qualified person must perform or supervise the maintenance or repair of that surface.'"

There are invisible factors that can cause slips as well. Concrete, tile and many other surfaces can be slippery, even when they are not wet. Dust, shoe structure, constant pacing and pivoting can cause a loss of traction when no friction is present. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the American Disabilities Act (ADA) have recommended a coefficient of friction of at least 0.6 to 0.8 on walking and standing surfaces.

Finding solutions for prevention is easier than you think. Matting is a great solution to help prevent fatigue as well as workplace slips. In many cases anti-fatigue mats can provide reasonable traction, but in certain circumstances flooring is a better solution for providing traction, and in some cases elevated, open to allow drainage, and ramps for grade elevation or for wheeled scenarios.

Everyone has slipped at one time or another. Manufacturing, hospitals, or virtually any type of floor

that has heavy or public traffic, can get a build-up of cross contaminants, in addition to their proprietary contaminants such as dirt, oil, water or ice. The best prevention is one that profits in keeping the floors dry and well maintained through:

- Regular cleaning and clearing of clutter
- Elevated open surface
- Traction surface materials

Reduction in the quantity of slips can save thousands of dollars and hours in productivity. The first step is simple—make the floor a priority. Inspection and testing of floors should be part of the routine maintenance in any facility.

*For more information about Wearwell matting systems, please visit [MSCDirect.com](https://www.mscdirect.com).*

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