

Workplace Safety

# Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls in the Food Processing Industry

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Food processing workers and employees face numerous health, wellness, and safety hazards every day in the workplace. Many of these risks involve slips, trips, and falls. "Injuries from slips and falls occur at a rate of 30.9 in food and 28.5 in beverage per 10,000 workers, according to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, higher than the 24.8 incidences in overall manufacturing."

Although some would assume adding anti-fatigue matting would reduce incidences of slips, trips, and falls, they may be surprised to learn that anti-fatigue matting can create more harm than good. Not only are anti-fatigue mats limited in their ability to cover a workplace, but with time they peel, pill, and can become very dangerous. Within the food processing industry, you have to be careful not to add too much texture to the floor itself. Although improving traction is helpful for walking, creating ridges in flooring can cause other problems. *Casey Ball*, regional market segment director-flooring for Sherwin-Williams explains that "the more texture you add, the harder it is to clean."

The food processing industry faces a unique set of challenges as it necessitates impeccable cleanliness on the floor, while providing workers with enough traction to avoid and reduce slips, trips, and falls. Even if a team washes the floors on a daily basis, they are still leaving themselves susceptible to safety hazards that can produce dangerous outcomes for workers.

A *study* conducted at Emory University showed that food industry employees have a 60% higher chance of suffering from workplace illness or injury compared to other industries. "Researchers found that injuries from slips, trips, and falls were highest in food processing, storage and retail, possibly because of high use of refrigeration."

Protecting your team and workplace requires care, concern, and planning. One thing remains consistent within the food processing industry and that is that employees need to be protected from the ground up. Reducing slips, trips, and falls while simultaneously preventing musculoskeletal disorders and reducing healthcare costs can be accomplished by implementing an anti-fatigue insole program.

Starting an insole program in your food processing facility can offer an immediate benefit to the workers, in the form of added comfort and protection from implementing anti-fatigue insoles in their work boots. According to this Occupational Health & Safety *article*, "it is best for workers to wear anti-fatigue insoles to give their feet the comfort, control, and shock absorption needed. Insoles that use memory foam technology, such as personal anti-fatigue mat insoles, provide optimum support and comfort—instantly giving relief to their feet and preventing unruly, work-related aches and pains."

*Previously Featured on MEGAComfort's website.*