

SLIPS TRIPS AND FALLS PROGRAM

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1.0 PURPOSE

Slip, trip and fall injuries contribute to the University of Waterloo's overall injury and lost time rates. This program identifies factors contributing to same elevation slips, trips and falls and supports prevention in the workplace. Waterloo's Slips Trips and Falls Program serves to increase awareness of injury prevention and eliminate or reduce hazards where they are identified.

2.0 SCOPE

This program applies to all Waterloo workers. Waterloo does not always control the work environment and workers may be subjected to same elevation slip, trip and fall hazards. In such cases, efforts by all workers will help to identify and implement appropriate measures (e.g., provision of supplies and/or equipment appropriate to the circumstances such as salt, sand or footwear attachments; worker training) to minimize risk and reduce injuries. Same elevation falls occur on relatively level surfaces, ramps and stairs and are caused by a disruption of normal or expected walking gait that results in a sudden loss of balance. The scope of this program does not include working at heights.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Slip

A slide causing an individual to lose their balance. This can either be corrected or cause the individual to fall. Slips happen when there is too little friction or traction between the footwear and the walking surface. Common causes of slips are:

- Wet or oily surfaces caused by occasional spills
- Weather hazards
- Loose, unanchored rugs or mats
- Flooring or other walking surfaces that do not have the same degree of traction in all areas

Trip

A stumble, often over an obstacle, causing an individual to lose their balance. This can either be corrected or cause the individual to fall. Trips happen when the foot strikes or hits an object. Common causes of tripping are:

- Obstructed view
- Poor lighting
- Clutter in the path of travel
- Wrinkled carpeting
- Uncovered cables
- Bottom drawers not being closed
- Uneven walking surfaces

Fall

An event that results in an individual or a body part coming into contact with the ground or other surface that is lower than the individual. Falls can occur at the same level (e.g., to the floor or ground on which the person was previously standing) or to a lower level (e.g., down a flight of stairs or through an opening). Falls often, although not always, result from slips or trips.

Corrective action

Pro-active actions taken to prevent incidents, hazards or non-compliance/non-conformity before they occur or actions taken post incident with the intention of preventing recurrence.

Hazard

The presence of an agent or environmental condition that could cause harm to people, property or the environment.

Incident

The presence of an agent or environmental condition that could cause harm to people, property or the environment.

Near miss

A work-related condition, incident or unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness, equipment or property damage but had the potential to do so.

Risk

The chance or probability that a person will be harmed or experience an adverse health effect if exposed to a hazard. Risk may also apply to situations where there is loss of property equipment, or harmful effects on the environment.

Risk Control

The elimination or reduction of risk associated with a hazard.

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 DEPARTMENT HEAD/CHAIR/DIRECTOR

- Provide leadership and support to ensure the implementation of this program.
- Facilitate the implementation of corrective actions identified through the process of incident investigation where required.
- Ensure the appropriate resources are applied for the purpose of risk control.
- Incorporate any new hazards identified by incident investigations into the annual departmental Hazard Register.

- Consult and communicate within the department all risk control changes resulting from investigation of incidents as appropriate.

4.2 SUPERVISOR/MANAGER

- Ensure that the workplace is regularly inspected for slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Ensure that procurement of products, equipment, and materials are consistent with departmental needs in prevention of slips, trips, and falls.
- Ensure that the Slips, Trips and Falls Program is communicated to workers.
- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed for the risks of slips, trips and falls within their areas of responsibility (e.g., generally and as circumstances change), including risk to clients and the public.
- Implement appropriate measures within their control to address slip, trip or fall hazards identified in the risk assessment.
- Refer actions that are outside of their direct control to others, to ensure that identified slip, trip or fall hazards can be addressed, for example through work orders or escalation to other levels of management.
- Ensure that prompt action is taken to address any potential or identified hazards that may contribute to the occurrence of slips, trips and falls (e.g., repair any damaged or broken surfaces, clean up spills, and mitigate snow or ice on surfaces).
- Investigate all incidents and near misses associated with slips, trips and falls to identify the root cause, corrective actions and to identify any needed changes to existing control measures or procedures.
- Keep records of key activities undertaken to minimize the likelihood of slips, trips and falls (e.g., cleaning and maintenance schedules).
- As part of the Job Hazards Analysis, complete safety footwear needs analysis to determine whether protective footwear is needed when performing jobs and/or tasks. Where a need for protective footwear is identified, provide the appropriate category of footwear and arrange for footwear replacement, when required.
- Develop safe work procedures and provide training.

4.3 WORKERS

- Take actions to eliminate slip, trip and fall hazards if able to do so.
- Avoid cutting through areas not designated or intended as walkways.
- Be vigilant and ensure that any slip, trip and fall hazards they are aware of are reported to their supervisors.

- Organize areas of their work environment within their control so as not to introduce slip, trip and fall hazards (e.g., trailing cables, open drawers, poor housekeeping).
- Wear protective footwear as required by their departments, ensure they wear the footwear and other personal protective equipment for the work environment(s) in which they work and advise supervisors when footwear needs replacement (e.g., worn treads).
- Wear personal footwear appropriate to the job and tasks performed when protective footwear is not required. This includes appropriate footwear for current weather conditions, including travel to and from personal vehicles or between campus buildings.
- Pay attention when walking, exercise caution during wet or slippery conditions and in the use of steps and stairs Use handrails when available.
- Follow all training and slip, trip and fall safe working procedures.
- Report all incidents, hazards and injuries to their supervisor, including near misses.
- Participate in incident investigations to assist in identifying causes and corrective actions.

4.4 SAFETY OFFICE

- Ensure that management, supervisory staff, workers and health and safety coordinators are made aware of this Program.
- Provide resources to guide departments in the selection of personal protective equipment.
- Assist in the design and/or delivery of training or other instructional or information-sharing mechanisms.
- Keep statistics on incidents and injuries to assist in planning prevention strategies, and communicate to client divisions as needed (e.g., management, JHSC worker members, workers, UWaterloo community).

4.5 JOINT HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE (JHSC)

- Incorporate identification of slip, trip and fall hazards into JHSC workplace inspections.
- Review incident and accident reports to assess slips, trips and falls injury trends.
- Make recommendations for the development of, or improvements to, existing slip, trip and fall prevention programs (e.g., safe work procedures, training, equipment) as needed.
- Regularly review this Program and recommend amendments, as needed.

4.6 FACILITY MANAGEMENT AND DESIGN

- Match floor cleaning and maintenance procedures with manufacturer's instructions or accepted industry practices for the type of floor surface.
- Follow appropriate procedures to minimize risks from wet cleaning.
- Maintain indoor and outdoor surfaces free of hazards or obstructions, or clearly identify the presence of hazards or obstructions if elimination is not possible or feasible, by using barriers or signage.
- In consultation with users and those who are responsible for ongoing maintenance:
 - Ensure that facilities are designed with appropriate flooring for the type of work operation or activity to be conducted within the facility.
 - Ensure that other aspects of the facilities are designed to minimize or eliminate the risk of slips, trips and falls. Consider placement of canopies over external doorways to prevent the collection of water at building entrances and install appropriate lighting.
 - Ensure that prompt action is taken to address any potential or identified hazards that may contribute to the occurrence of slips, trips and falls (e.g., repair any damaged or broken surfaces, clean up spills, and mitigate snow or ice on surfaces).

5.0 PREVENTION OF SLIP TRIP AND FALL INJURIES

The following provides slips, trips and falls injury prevention strategies and can be used to increase awareness for all staff.

5.1 COMMON HAZARDS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

- Unsuitable footwear
- Slippery surfaces (oily or greasy, etc.)
- Seasonal slip, trip and fall hazards (snow and ice)
- Spills of wet or dry substances
- Changes in walkway levels and slopes
- Unsecured mats
- Unsafe use of ladders
- Poor lighting
- Debris and cables in walkways
- Lack of guardrails on mezzanines and balconies
- Poorly maintained equipment

5.2 WINTER SAFETY TIPS

- Walk slowly and carefully on icy or snowy walkways. Take short, deliberate steps in which the mid-foot strikes the ground first, not the heel. The body should always be centered over the feet. This avoids slips at the heel strike phase of gait, the most common slip occurrence. Slowing the walking pace further reduces the likelihood of slipping.
- Avoid areas with poor lighting, when possible.
- Change direction carefully when walking on slippery surfaces.
- Avoid icy areas of walkways when there is an alternate route
- Be aware that black ice can look like wet pavement.
- Be especially cautious when new snow may have hidden icy patches beneath it.
- Ensure footwear has a good tread and is appropriate for cold or wet weather.
- Be aware that walkways or stairs at any premises could be slippery.
- Avoid walking with your hands in your pockets; keep hands free for balance.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of materials where possible.
- Carry items in a way that will not throw you off balance or obstruct vision; it is important to see where you are walking.
- Use handrails on stairs, so you can catch yourself if you slip on icy steps.
- Place your full attention on walking; digging in your pocketbook or backpack or using cell phones or other devices while walking is dangerous.
- Be aware of changes in friction on walking surfaces (e.g., walking from snow to ice, from curb to road, or from inside to outside).
- Test potentially slick areas by tapping your foot on them.
- Be particularly careful of slippery conditions in the morning when melt water from the previous day may be frozen.
- Avoid climbing over snow banks and look for an alternate route.
- When entering buildings, be aware that immediate entrances and stairs may be slippery from melted ice or snow. When you see such a hazard, bring it to the attention of the person in charge.
- Remove the snow from the soles of your footwear as you enter a building or vehicle.
- Bring to the attention of your manager or supervisor any UW walkways or entrances that are slippery or in poor conditions.
- Report any concerns, hazards, or slip, trip or fall incidents to your supervisor.

5.3 SAFELY ENTERING AND EXITING VEHICLES

- Always inspect your vehicle and the area surrounding your vehicle before entering or exiting the vehicle. Survey the environment for items such as ice, snow, grease, oil, debris, rocks, potholes, uneven surfaces.
- Survey the vehicle for cracks or excessive wear to the access points such as steps, handholds, etc. When possible remove ice, snow, or other debris from steps, handholds and footwear before entering or exiting.
- Ensure vehicle clutter is removed and equipment secured to avoid trip hazards when entering or exiting.
- Whenever possible, park the vehicle in an area free of the above hazards.
- When climbing in or out of a vehicle, face the vehicle where practicable and always use the three point contact rule. Keep three points in contact with the vehicle, either one hand and two feet, or two hands and one foot. Use the vehicle door for support to provide stability.
- Step with caution (on the mid-foot) in icy conditions.
- Report any vehicle or related hazards to your supervisor when unable to resolve yourself.

6.0 CONTROL MEASURES

Consider the following hierarchy of controls for implementing corrective actions to slip, trip and fall hazards. Establish safe work practices by considering the characteristics of the physical work area and tasks performed by the worker.

6.1 ELIMINATION/SUBSTITUTION

- Clean up spills promptly.
- Remove debris, snow and ice.
- Remove clutter from walking surfaces.
- Clean grease build-up from slip-resistant mats.
- Remove debris and cables in walkways.

6.2 ENGINEERING CONTROLS

- Install slip-resistant flooring and slip-resistant mats.
- Reroute or install bridges over cables on floors, which can be trip hazards.
- Ensure appropriate slope on ramps.
- Ensure adequate handrails are installed.
- Maintain surface free of obstructions/holes.
- Ensure appropriate drainage.

- Minimize glare and contrast with adequate lighting.
- Minimize environmental influences (e.g., blocking wind, preventing wet surfaces from icing).
- Ensure guardrails are in place for raised floors, mezzanines and balconies.
- Ensure sound footing for ladders and work platforms.
- Install covers on holes in the floor.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

- Provide wet floor signage.
- Train workers to prevent slips, trips and falls.
- Establish safe work practices.
- Communicate the procedure for reporting hazards.
- Ensure prompt maintenance.
- Design jobs to minimize tasks requiring excessive pushing/pulling, line-of-sight obstruction and over-reaching.
- Ensure shovels, mops and buckets are readily available.
- Correct poor work practices.
- Conduct monthly inspections.
- Review slips, trips and same-level fall incidents to identify preventive actions.
- Routinely clean floors with appropriate solutions.
- Use two hands to climb\descend ladders, and maintain three-point contact while working on ladders.

6.4 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Select appropriate footwear based on a risk assessment of the job task.
- Wear proper-fitting footwear that may include slip-resistant soles.

7.0 MONITORING

The Safety Office will monitor trends of slip, trip and fall incidents and may initiate further investigation where:

- A pattern of incidents is identified.
- Lost time from work or medical aid has occurred.

Any situation is deemed to require further investigation.

8.0 RECORD OF REVISIONS

Date	Author/Editor	Change	Version
November 2020	Elizabeth Ney	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Updated section 3.0 DefinitionsUpdated section 4.1 Department Head/Chair/Director Roles and Responsibilities	Slips Trips and Falls Program_v.1.1_NOV2020
November 2019	Elizabeth Ney	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Added section 8.0 Record of Revisions	Slips Trips and Falls Program_v.1.0_NOV2019
November 2018	Elizabeth Ney	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No changes	Slips Trips and Falls Program_v.1.0_NOV2018