

In collaboration with:



*This information was developed in collaboration with The ASU Group and in support of MICU's Workers' Compensation Fund with a goal of reducing claim exposure at member institutions.*

Slips, trips and falls have the potential to be a major cause of injury for your employees, campus visitors, and students. A common misconception is that slip and fall injuries "just happen" and little can be done to prevent them. This mind-set needs to change if we intend to reduce slip, trip and fall injuries. All accidents have causes and, therefore, are preventable.

## Preventing Winter-Time Slips, Trips, & Falls

While slip, trip and fall hazards are present year-round, there is an increased potential for them in the winter months due to snow and ice. The first line of defense against slip, trip and fall incidents includes having a well-planned strategy and implementing a snow and ice removal plan.

**1) Develop and implement a written snow and ice removal plan. Clearly assign the person(s) responsible for carrying out the plan.** They should be responsible for duties such as selecting contractors, maintaining removal logs, frequency of removal, use of sand/salt, and proper claim handling practices.

**2) Determine if the snow and ice removal will be carried out by in-house personnel or by an outside contractor.**

If using an outside contractor they should be selected on their expertise, response times, and capabilities. Be sure to verify proper liability insurance coverage of any contractor. Annually obtain and review insurance certificates and contracts. There should be a cancellation of liability insurance notice requirement in the contract. If your employees perform the snow removal work, provide the right training and equipment, such as insulated boots, gloves and jackets and snow removal equipment.

**3) Designate someone to monitor weather conditions, walking surfaces, and effectiveness of removal practices.**

**4) Maintain a Snow Removal Log**

Information should include the individual's name, estimated amounts of snowfall, ice buildup, temperature, action taken (e.g., called contractor, used plow, applied sand/salt), date and times, inspection notes, and unusual conditions.

**5) Perform incident investigations promptly**

Injury incidents and near-miss incidents should be promptly investigated to learn as much as possible about the root causes. It is important to evaluate the footwear worn by an employee injured in a slip, trip and fall incident as a potential cause in the incident. Employees are expected to wear footwear appropriate for the duties of their work task, and that includes walking outdoors between buildings and to/from parking lots.



In Michigan, **17.4%** of all Workers' Compensation cases were due to injuries sustained from slips, trips, and falls on the job.



Through the 3rd quarter of 2018, MICU has experienced 34 injury cases resulting from all types of slip, trip and fall incidents, for a total of **33% of the total reported injuries**. This is slightly above the national average.

### Causes of slips, trips, and falls

- Wet or greasy floors
- Loose, dry materials on the floor
- Uneven walking surfaces
- Polished or freshly waxed floors
- Loose carpeting or mats
- Elevation transitions from one floor level to another
- Damaged or irregular steps; no handrails
- Sloping walking surfaces
- Improper footwear / Wet, muddy, greasy or oily soles
- Clutter
- Electrical cords or cables
- Open desk or file cabinet drawers
- Damaged ladder steps
- Ramps and steps without skid-resistant surfaces
- Weather hazards – rain, sleet, ice, snow, hail, frost, wind-blown debris on walkways



# Six Guidelines for a Safer Work Environment

## 1) Create Good Housekeeping Practices

Safety and housekeeping go hand-in-hand. If your facility's housekeeping habits are poor, the risk of injuries increases along with ever-increasing insurance costs and the possibility of regulatory citations. To create an effective housekeeping program, there are three simple steps to get you started:

- Plan ahead – Know what needs to be done, who's responsible to do it.
- Assign responsibility – It may be necessary to assign a specific person or group of workers to clean up, although personal responsibility for housekeeping should be encouraged/ enforced.
- Implement a formal program – Establish housekeeping procedures as a part of the daily routine. The effectiveness of the program must be monitored and adjustments made as needed.

## 2) Minimize Wet or Slippery Surfaces

Walking surfaces account for a significant portion of injuries reported by state agencies. The most frequently reported types of surfaces where these injuries occur include,

- Parking lots and sidewalks
- Food preparation/serving areas
- Floors in general

## 3) Avoid Creating Obstacles in Aisles and Walkways

Injuries can also result from tripping on obstacles, clutter, materials and equipment in walkways. Attention to housekeeping in walkways remains the most effective control measure in avoiding the proliferation of these types of hazards.

- Policies / Procedures – Have policies / procedures in place and allow time for cleaning the area, especially where scrap material or waste is a by-product of the work operation. Keep all work areas, passageways, storerooms and service areas clean and orderly. In office areas, avoid leaving boxes, files or briefcases in the aisles.
- Cords, Cables & Hoses - Avoid stringing cords, cables or air hoses across hallways or in any designated aisle.
- Be Proactive - Encourage safe work practices such as closing file cabinet drawers after use and picking up loose items from the floor.
- Inspect and Observe - Conduct periodic inspections for slip and trip hazards. Look for and address slip, trip and



Foot traction on outdoor walking surfaces can change considerably with changing weather conditions. These hazardous conditions can then be transmitted to indoor surfaces as moisture is tracked in by pedestrian traffic. Slip, trip & fall mitigation procedures should be in place and constantly monitored for effectiveness. Other positive actions to take include,

- Keep parking lots and sidewalks clean and in good repair.
- Treat icy, snow-covered surfaces with melting agents. In some extreme cases, it may be necessary to suspend or restrict use of an area during inclement weather.
- Use anti-skid materials on steps and sloping surfaces where possible.
- Display WET FLOOR signs in trouble areas.
- Clean up spills immediately. Create a procedure for taking the appropriate action when someone causes or comes across a food or drink spill.
- Use area rugs or mats in entryways and in food preparation areas.

## 4) Create and Maintain Proper Lighting

Poor lighting in the workplace is associated with an increase in accidents. Use proper illumination in walkways, staircases, ramps, hallways, basements, construction areas and dock areas.

- Keep work areas well lighted and clean.
- Upon entering a darkened room, always turn on the light first.
- Keep poorly lit walkways clear of clutter and obstructions.
- Keep areas around light switches clear and accessible.
- Repair fixtures, switches and cords immediately if they malfunction.



## 5) Wear Proper Footwear

Footwear plays a significant role in preventing slip, trips and falls. Typical shoes worn in an office environment are not well suited for walking on snow-covered/icy surfaces. It is important to evaluate the footwear worn by an employee injured in a slip, trip and fall incident as a potential cause in the incident. Employees are expected to wear footwear appropriate to their work tasks, and working environment.

## 6) Control Individual Behavior

This condition is the toughest to control. It is human nature to let our guard down and be distracted while performing our duties. Being in a hurry will result in walking too fast for conditions which increases the chance of a slip, trip or fall. Not using handrails, taking walking shortcuts, not watching where one is going, using a cell phone, carrying materials which obstructs the vision, wearing sunglasses in low-light areas, and hast are all common contributors to slip, trip and fall injuries. It's ultimately the responsibility of each individual to walk safely and stay alert for slip, trip, and fall hazards.