

Trip hazards on the job

Take steps to keep sites clean

When you hear “falls,” you probably think about falling from a ladder, a roof, or some other high place. It’s true that falls from heights do cause the most injuries, and they’re usually the most severe. But lost-time fall injuries can also happen when workers fall to the same level they’re standing or walking on. For example, a worker might fall after stumbling over a two-by-four, tripping on some garbage, or slipping on a muddy plank.

Statistics show that the body part most often hurt in such slip and trip accidents is the knee. Other parts frequently injured are the shoulder, ankle, back, and wrist.

Most slip and trip injuries are caused by poor housekeeping (i.e., not cleaning up garbage around the site). The easy solution is to keep your site clean. Keep pathways and work areas clear of materials and debris.

What employers and supervisors can do

- Make a plan for keeping the site clean, particularly for removing construction debris and other garbage from walkways, stairways, and work areas. You can have a plan for continuous housekeeping or you can schedule it for a specific time.
- Perform daily inspections. Assess and eliminate the hazards.
- In your jobsite orientation, describe in detail the contractor’s and worker’s responsibilities for keeping the site clean.
- Keep building entrances clear.
- Remind workers of their responsibilities by giving safety talks on housekeeping, especially when you see the site getting cluttered.
- Ask equipment operators to steer clear of soft ground and to avoid walkways. Otherwise, the tires or tracks will make ruts in the ground, which can cause someone to trip or twist an ankle.
- Repair ruts or uneven ground on walkways.
- During the winter, you need to take extra care to prevent slips and trips. Keep walkways, access areas, and stairs clear of snow and ice. Use salt or sand in those areas and make sure everyone’s boots provide good traction.
- Raise the main walking paths.
- Fill low-lying areas with gravel to reduce the accumulation of water, ice, and mud.
- Have enough disposal bins around the jobsite to make it easy for workers to put their garbage in the right place.



What workers can do

- Before starting work, look around your work area and become familiar with your surroundings.
- Keep the areas at the top and base of ladders clear of debris.
- Pay attention to your footing when carrying things.
- Don't walk backwards. If you have to walk backwards—say, to carry something with another worker—then make sure ahead of time that the path is clear.
- Walk, don't run.
- Clean up after yourself.
- Make sure that cords from power tools and lights don't pose a tripping hazard. Fasten the cords to the floor, or keep them away from pathways and work areas. Unplug them when they aren't in use.
- Stack materials neatly and secure them so that they can't fall into pathways or work areas. And make sure the surface they are on can support their weight.
- If you see a tripping hazard, clean it up or fix it if you can. Otherwise, tell your supervisor.



How IHSA can help

IHSA has resources available to assist with creating a plan to eliminate trip hazards.

Poster: *A safe site is a clean site*

This poster reminds you that a safe site is a clean site and to throw out tripping hazards. Print this poster and post it at your workplace. It's a free download available from the IHSA website. Visit ihsa.ca/free-products/downloads to download this poster (W202).

Slips, trips, and falls topic page

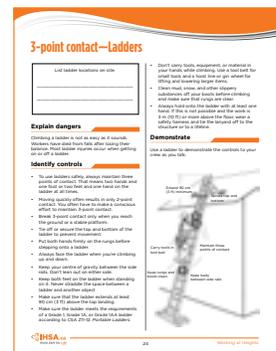
This section of IHSA's website contains information on preventing falls when working at heights as well as from slipping and tripping. Visit ihsa.ca/topics_hazards/slips_trips_falls for information and resources.

Safety talks

Visit IHSA's Safety Talks section of the website and find several talks related to slips and trips in the construction and transportation sector. Go to ihsa.ca/resources/safetytalks for these talks and many more.



W202



Safety talk: 3-point contact—Ladders