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1. Solving Slips, Trips & Falls

According to the National Safety Council Injury Facts, 2014 Edition, no matter your industry, gender, age or years on the job you are at risk of slips, trips, and falls. A survey of safety professionals indicates that the most frequent factors in workplace slip, trip and fall incidents are housekeeping issues, wet or slippery surfaces, and a contributor in more than half of these incidents is human factors. These human factors require constant attention, and most can be avoided entirely leading to a significant reduction in slip/trip/fall injuries.

While physical factors are important and should be addressed, eliminating/reducing the incidence of slip/trip/fall injuries requires reducing or eliminating rushing, frustration, fatigue, and complacency. These four conditions can lead to getting distracted, walking faster than is safe, or losing your balance because your eyes or mind aren't on the task of walking. These conditions can also affect critical decisions related to wearing proper footwear, response to hazards, holding handrails, and/or housekeeping habits.

Physical factors to consider include:

- Regular maintenance
- Rules and procedures
- Proper equipment and guards

Human factors to consider include:

- Proper understanding of risks
- Building and reinforcing habits
- Increased awareness of the role of human factors

Key to reducing slip/trip/fall injury incidents is building safety habits to mitigate the likelihood of slips, trips and falls. Building better safety habits is a process, starting with analyzing small mistakes, perhaps identified through use of a near miss/close call reporting system. Once small mistakes are identified, worker awareness through training leads to adjustment of habits, followed by practice of new habits and examination of results.

Habits to reduce slips, trips and falls include:

- Walk at appropriate speeds.
- Test footing before committing weight.
- Use railings on stairs.
- Maintain 3-points of contact on ladders and equipment.
- Reduce over-striding when walking.
- Look before moving.
- Wear appropriate footwear.
- Keep eyes and mind on the task.
- Be alert to trip hazards.

Adopt safety as your attitude...don't learn by accident!

Resources

- *Solving Slips, Trips and Falls Once and For All*. (n.d.). SAFESTART. Retrieved October 24, 2023, from <https://safestart.com/guides/slips-trips-falls/> (URL to download free guide)
- *Injury facts - National Safety Council*. (2023, October 11). Injury Facts. <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/>

2. Staying Safe Outdoors in Cold Weather

When outdoors during cold weather, we are subject to frostbite, hypothermia and cold stress, all of which can be fatal. However, cold stress can be prevented. Follow these practices to stay safe in cold weather:

- Know the symptoms of cold stress: reddening skin, tingling, pain, swelling, leg cramps, numbness, and blisters.
- Dress properly; wear layers of loose-fitting clothing, insulated gloves and boots, and cover your head.

- Monitor your physical condition and those of your coworkers.
- Stay dry and pack extra clothes; moisture can increase heat loss from the body.
- Take frequent breaks in warm, dry areas.
- Drink warm liquids.

If wind speed and temperature are known, you can use various online and phone apps to determine effective temperature. The effective temperature as identified using a wind chill index helps you determine the level of precautions to take. A wind chill index considers heat loss from the human body to its surroundings during cold and windy weather.

Resources

- OSHA Alert: Working Safely in Cold Weather
<https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3982.pdf>
- OSHA Plan.Equip.Train. “Winter Weather”
 - Cold Stress: <https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather/cold-stress>
 - Preparedness: <https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather/preparedness>
 - Hazards/Precautions: <https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather/hazards>
 - Additional Resources: <https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather/resources>
- EHS Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) **Cold Stress**
https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-cold_stress.pdf
- National Weather Service Wind Chill Calculator
https://www.weather.gov/epz/wxcalc_windchill

3. Safe Winter Walking

Every year there are several slip, trip and fall injury incidents at UNL related to walking in winter conditions. According to the National Safety Council, more than 25,000 slips, trips, and falls happen every day in the United States – one every 17 minutes. Winter poses a unique challenge for preventing slips, trips, and falls. Areas to pay special attention to are:

- Building entrances, inside and out
- Parking lots
- Sidewalks

We think of snow and ice as being a potential slip/trip/fall hazards, but frost or even rain can lead to slippery conditions. Start a hazard mitigation strategy by evaluating any uneven area or hard-to-see curbs or steps. Check illumination in parking lots and on sidewalks since days are shorter. Being able to see well is

important for navigating areas prone to ice. Sufficient walk-off matting should be installed inside building entrances to reduce tracked-in water/snow and debris.

Removing snow and ice from all exterior walking areas helps avoid potentially hazardous situations. Notice where water tends to puddle up or snow tends to drift and take steps to avoid these areas. Remember loading docks where workers and perhaps carts need to traverse. Staircases outdoors should be visible with reflective tape to mark hard-to-see surfaces and ideally have an anti-slip tread or strip.

Complete a safety walk around your facility and parking lot weekly or in adverse weather to minimize the chance of an injury slip, trip or fall. Note any changes since the last inspection such as seasonal changes, spills or stray objects that have appeared and might interfere with the walking surface. Note the tips provided in the SAFE Winter Walking posters available through EHS.

Finally, prepare yourself:

- Wear proper footwear, ideally with good rubber tread.
- Take short steps and walk at a slower pace.

Order and post these three EHS safety posters to share safe winter walking safety tips with others in your area! Requests may be made by phone (402.472.4925) or email (ehs@unl.edu). Posters may be picked up or delivered via campus mail. To use campus mail please provide your name, building, room number and zip code including the 4 numbers after the dash.



Resources

- EHS Weather Safety Posters <https://ehs.unl.edu/safety-posters/weather-safety-posters>
- Really Obvious: On Ice <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Gv6QNZytF8&list=PLh0k4GzppsqEyNcNx-fxPRIdpC-hERTQH&index=17>
- OSHA Preventing Slips on Snow and Ice https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/hazards_precautions.html#walking
- OH&S “Gearing Up for Slip, Trip and Fall Season”
- https://digital.1105media.com/OHS/2020/OHS_2020_10/OS_2010Q1_701923809.html#p=17

4. Safety Shorts – Safe Winter Driving

The following videos provide tips on safe winter driving.

- ❖ Winter Driving Safety Tips (AARP, duration 2:00 minutes) <https://videos.aarp.org/detail/video/6106316492001/winter-driving-safety-tips>
- ❖ Essential Winter Driving Tips | Consumer Reports (duration 2:53 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIWVRbr15ek>

NOTE: Resources are provided for informational purposes only. Publication does not in any way endorse a particular company or product or affect current UNL policies and procedures.

5. Are You Properly Handling Waste Items?

Proper waste management in research laboratories is an essential aspect of ensuring the safety of personnel, protecting the environment, and adhering to environment protection regulations.

- Use proper container labeling, including chemical names and status (used, spent, excess).
- Maintain collection containers in the room where the waste was generated.
- Ensure containers are not overfilled. Allow head space.

- Keep containers closed except when immediately adding contents to the container.
- Store containers appropriately based on their hazard classification.
- Implement secondary containment measures for spill contingencies.

Further information on accumulating and requesting collection by EHS can be found in the EHS Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) Hazardous/Radioactive Material Collection Procedures: https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-chem_collection_procedures.pdf.

6. EHS Needs Your Feedback

Environmental Health and Safety is committed to excellent customer service and offers a *Customer Satisfaction Survey* as an easy method for the campus community to provide feedback on our services and staff. Would you please take a few moments to complete the survey (<https://ehs.unl.edu/customer-satisfaction-survey>)? This will help EHS to identify areas where we might need to focus more attention.

To effectively evaluate potential areas for improvement, please provide specific information or examples and your name and contact information. We greatly appreciate your participation.

Please feel free to contact Brenda Osthus, EHS Director, at 402.472.4927 or bosthus1@unl.edu if you would rather communicate outside the parameters of this survey.

7. Revised Safe Operating Procedures (SOPs)

If any of these SOPs are of relevance to your work, please review.

- **Biohazard Door Postings** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-door_postings.pdf
Minor updates and a new template unveiled for plant pathogen/pest signage.
- **Biohazard Incident Reporting** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-incident_reporting-NIH.pdf
Formerly “Incident Reporting – National Institutes of Health,” the revised SOP includes guidance of what constitutes a biohazard incident and includes a sample reporting form.
- **Pathogen Inventories** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-pathogen_inventories.pdf

Updated instructions to reflect the inclusion of pathogen inventories in NuRamp forms. Added chimeric SARS-CoV/SARS-CoV-2 to select agent list in Appendix A.

- **Preparing a Laboratory Biosafety Manual** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-preparing_biosafety_manual.pdf
Updated language and figures to reflect the transition from NUgrant to NuRamp. Updated table of contents list.
- **Sharps - Handling and Disposing** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-sharps-handling_disposing.pdf
Reorganized the 'Disposal' section to group bullet points that cover the same type of sharp (those used with radioactive materials, chemicals, and biological hazards) for clarity.

Adopt Safety as Your Attitude – DON'T LEARN BY ACCIDENT!

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