

SLIPS, TRIPS, FALLS – REDUCING RISK AND AVOIDING INJURY

(For assistance, please contact EHS at (402) 472-4925, or visit our web site at <http://ehs.unl.edu/>)

Slips, trips, and falls are the main causes of work-related accidents at UNL. Most of these types of accidents can be prevented with improved housekeeping, appropriate guardrails, maintenance of walking surfaces, and remaining alert to the work surroundings. This SOP provides recommendations for abating hazards that may result in slip, trip, and fall accidents.

General Housekeeping

- Keep passageways and stairways free of debris, boxes, and other moveable items (i.e., carts, delivery/mail items, recycling containers, etc.). Maintain sufficiently wide aisles where mechanical handling equipment (e.g., forklift) is used.
- Avoid placement of newspapers, flyers, etc. in traffic ways.
- Maintain floors in a clean and dry condition. Avoid wet mopping during high traffic times. Use wet floor signs to warn others of hazardous conditions. Use walk-off mats at entrances to minimize slick floors. During inclement weather, use “Caution - Wet Floor” signs at building entrances as appropriate.
- Equip areas where wet processes are used (i.e., dishwashing rooms in kitchens) with a means of drainage and gratings, mats, or raised platforms.
- Clean spills of water, oil, and other liquids immediately. Use “Caution – Wet Floor” sign until dry.
- Repair leaking machinery and equipment to prevent slick areas on floors.
- Keep floors and passageways free of protruding nails, splinters, holes, loose boards, broken tiles, loose carpeting or curled mats, and other similar trip hazards. Report these conditions to the Building Maintenance Reporter.
- Avoid placement of cords in travel paths. Use a cord runner when such placement can not be avoided.
- Do not leave cupboards, doors, drawers, file cabinets, etc. ajar.
- Avoid slippery floor surfacing materials.
- Report burnt out lighting or inadequate lighting to the Building Maintenance Reporter.
- Report outdoor slippery or uneven areas to Landscape Services (e.g., ice accumulations or water pooling on sidewalks, buckled sidewalks, etc.).

Handrails, Ladders, Covers, and Guardrails

- Use handrails in stairways.

- Use ladders that are in good condition and properly rated. Use them only in the manner intended. Do not use make-shift ladders (i.e., chairs, stools, stacked boxes, etc.). See EHS SOP, **Portable Ladder Safety**.
- Use covers and/or guardrails to protect employees from the hazards of open pits, tanks, vats, ditches, etc.
- Floor holes, into which employees can accidentally walk, must be guarded by either a standard railing with toe-board (4 inches high) or a floor hole cover of standard strength and construction. When the cover or the guardrail is not in place, the floor hole must be constantly attended by someone.
- Open-sided floors or platforms that are four (4) feet or more above the adjacent floor must be guarded by a standard railing on all open sides, except where there is an entrance to a ramp, stairway, or fixed ladder.
- Regardless of height, open-sided floors, walkways, platforms or runways above or adjacent to dangerous equipment must be guarded with a standard railing and toe-board.

Safe Personal Practices

- Wear shoes that are sturdy and not prone to slipping.
- Walk at a reasonable pace and be aware of your surroundings.
- Do not lean or tilt back in chairs.
- Avoid poorly lit travel paths.
- Be especially cautious when in unfamiliar territory.
- Avoid areas where holes and uneven surfaces are obscured or hidden (i.e., areas of tall grass).
- Do not try to carry loads that are too heavy or that obstruct your view.
- Use handrails when on stairs. Take stairs at a safe pace and only one at a time.