

IRSST Study Has Recommendations on Preventing Slips



Slips, trips and falls on the same level are some of the most common workplace safety incidents. Although most such incidents don't result in fatalities or serious injuries, they do happen often and result in injuries that are serious enough to cause workers to miss work'sometimes for substantial periods of time.

So it's important to take slips, trips and falls seriously and implement appropriate safety measures to prevent them.

Two occupational groups'police officers and school crossing guards'approached the IRSST for help in reducing and/or preventing slips. So the IRSST conducted a study to identify the risk factors associated with slipping incidents and better target preventive measures.

The study included:

1. A review of the scientific literature on the slip problem;
2. An examination of statistics on slip incidents among police officers and school crossing guards from 2007 to 2009 to determine the circumstances under which these events occur and to assess the relative importance of the various risk factors in the two target populations; and
3. Focus groups with police officers, school crossing guards and highway controllers to gain insight into possible relationships between the various risk factors and to tackle the issue of worker footwear.

The study identified the following risk factors:

- Poor grip or low friction between footwear and the underfoot surface
- The physical work environment
- The nature of the work activity, such as carrying a load, going up or down stairs
- How work is organized
- Time constraints
- Nature of the ground, such as permeability or wear and tear of the flooring, a damaged walking surface, the presence of obstacles, the degree of clutter and the presence of a contaminant or spill
- Use of improper footwear for the ground conditions

- Lighting
- Weather
- Fatigue
- Aging
- Inattention.

Based on the study's results, it made the following recommendations in these key areas, which are relevant to many industry sectors:

Maintenance of the work premises/location:

- Keep walkways, stairways and parking lots clear (that is, remove snow and ice, clean up any spills or debris);
- Spread abrasives on roads, parking lots, walkways and school crosswalks; and
- Install handrails in stairways and any other appropriate areas.

Use of adequate footwear:

- Soles adapted to the work situation, for example, on dry ice at '10 °C, flexible materials, possible use of flat cleats, rough surface; and
- Footwear or boots that aren't too heavy or cumbersome and that are the right size.

Safe performance of work activities:

- Provide sufficient lighting to allow for good visibility;
 - Keep an eye out for risks so as to be able to adapt your gait and ensure greater locomotor stability;
 - Acquire the necessary experience to know how to adjust your gait on a slippery surface; and
 - Improve your postural balance by keeping your body's centre of gravity within the base of support, wear less heavy and cumbersome footwear, and avoid carrying items that are too big.

The OHS Insider has additional resources, tips, tools and information for preventing slips, trips and falls, including:

- Nine tips for preventing slips, trips and falls
- Identifying slip, trip or fall hazards
- Housekeeping Requirements under the OHS Laws
- Adequate lighting levels
- A slips, trips and falls inspection checklist
- Requiring workers to wear suitable footwear, taking into account of the type of job, floor surface, typical floor conditions and the slip-resistant properties of the soles.