

Spot The Safety Violation: 9 Tips for Preventing Trips



Does the marked walkway provide safe passage for workers? What has made this path dangerous?



One of the most common types of hazards in workplaces regardless of industry is slip, trip and fall hazards. Such hazards vary widely, ranging from wet floors and icy paths to poorly maintained stairwells and tools that haven't been put away. What all these hazards have in common is that they can cause workers to lose their footing and fall, often getting injured in the process.

This picture shows a workplace that has a walkway for pedestrians clearly marked in yellow paint. Presumably, this path is supposed to be an area where workers can safely walk without being exposed to hazards from the machinery and equipment used in the facility.

But as the photo shows, the cord to the tool being used by the worker on the right is strung across the workplace and right across the walkway to an outlet in the wall on the left. So how safe would workers be using the walkway with this trip-and-fall hazard in their path?

Power cords for equipment and others kind of cords, such as extension cords, can easily result in safety incidents if they aren't kept out of workers' paths or secured out of the way.

Example: A nurse gave medication to a patient at an Ontario hospital. When she left the bedside, her foot had gotten caught in a cable attached to the equipment in place on the patient's bed. She fell and broke her arm. The cord hadn't been properly secured. In fact, dangling cords were a known safety hazard in the hospital. The MOL found that the hospital failed to provide adequate information, instruction and supervision with respect to avoiding trip hazards associated with cords. The hospital pleaded guilty and was fined \$50,000 [St. Joseph's Health Care London, Govt. News Release, June 5, 2014].

9 TIPS FOR PREVENTING TRIPS

As common as slip, trip and fall hazards are, the good news is that they're some of the easiest hazards to remedy. Here are nine tips employers can use to address slip, trip and fall hazards in the workplace:

1. Regularly inspect the workplace for these hazards. For example, check floors for damage and ensure maintenance is done when necessary to address holes, cracks and loose carpets and mats. (Use this [slips, trips and falls inspection checklist](#).) And make sure you take appropriate steps to address hazards that you *do* identify.
2. Implement good basic housekeeping practices. For example, keep the work environment clean and dry, with floors and walkways clear of obstacles. (See, [Housekeeping Requirements under the OHS Laws](#).)
3. Ensure [adequate lighting levels](#), positioning lights to ensure all floor areas are evenly lit and all potential hazards, obstructions and spills can be clearly seen.
4. Ensure that floor surfaces are suitable for the work carried out, such as resistant to oil and chemicals used in production processes. And in areas where water is used, there should be drains to prevent puddles from forming.
5. Make sure stairways have handrails, slip-resistant covers on steps, high visibility and non-slip markings on the front edges of steps, and good lighting.
6. Clean up spills immediately using an appropriate cleaning method. Use warning signs where the floor is wet and arrange alternative routes. (See, [Spill Response Compliance Centre](#).)
7. When possible, remove any obstructions that could cause workers to trip or fall. If that's not possible, then use appropriate barriers and warning notices.
8. Practice good cord management. For example, position equipment so power cords don't cross pedestrian routes, such as the cord in this picture does. And securely fix cords to surfaces.
9. Require 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.

Things that *workers* can do to avoid tripping over cords and other hazards include:

- Immediately clean up spills and clear away any obstacles or clutter.
- Alert others to the hazard, such as by putting up warning signs.
- Wear well-fitting, non-slip footwear that's right for the job. Make sure the tread is in good condition and the shoelaces are tied correctly.
- Don't carry or move more than you can safely handle.
- Make sure you can see where you're going when carrying large items.
- Avoid distractions such as using a cellphone while walking.
- Pay attention to signage and watch out for hazards on walkways.
- Avoid taking shortcuts instead of using designated pathways.
- Walk ' don't run.
- Use handrails on stairs.
- Slow down and be cautious when walking on uneven surfaces, through cluttered areas or on wet floors.