

Waiting for a Fall

Falls are the most common cause of workplace injuries and the second leading cause of accidental death in North America. Your job as custodian is important as your co-workers lives are in your hands. Keeping surfaces clear of clutter and clean of debris makes walkways safe for everyone, including you.

What Can Go Wrong

Slips, trips, and falls can happen anywhere, at any time. They can cause any number of injuries, like sprains, strains, bruises, contusions, fractures, abrasions, and lacerations. Just ask Jacob.

An office manager, Jacob was walking down the hallway at work one morning and, paying more attention to his iPhone than where he was going, tripped over an electrical cord a co-worker had forgotten to put away. He stubbed his toe and landed hard on his hands and knees. While he was embarrassed to have fallen, what was worse was the severely sprained ankle he received in the fall.

His injury put him out of commission for at least a week and on crutches for another two.

Jacob's story, while not ending happily, at least did not end in his death. A slip, trip, or fall like his could have easily landed him in the hospital or morgue if he had hit his head. Instead it ended up in one of the many frequent slip, trip, or fall injuries, a sprain.

How To Protect Yourself

While slips, trips, and falls can happen randomly, as Jacob found out the hard way, there are ways to reduce the possibility of injury. There are three steps you can take to help prevent slips, trips and falls.

Good housekeeping is possibly the best way to prevent slips, trips, and falls. This includes cleaning all spills immediately. Wet walking surfaces are the biggest cause of slips. Even the smallest amount of difference in flooring can cause a slip, trip, or fall. Therefore, secure the flooring, like mats, rugs, and carpets, so they lay flat. Remove obstacles from walkways and keep them free of clutter.

This includes your own cleaning equipment as well as things like cords, cables, boxes, etc.

Footwear is probably not the first thing you think of when you want to prevent slips, trips, and falls. However, wearing the right kind of shoe can certainly help. Make sure that your shoelaces are tied and that the shoe is appropriate for the task. If you are working in doors, wear non-skid soles or low heels. If working out of doors, consider wearing shoes with a deep tread. Regardless of the environment in which you work, high heels and smooth soled shoes increase the potential for a slip or fall.

Create and maintain **proper lighting** in your work spaces. Make sure that walkways, staircases, hallways are well illuminated. You'll also want to keep all work areas well lit as well. If these areas are dark, it can be easy to trip on unseen obstacles and injure yourself. Repair or replace lights, fixtures, and cords if they break immediately.

Final Word

Keeping a facility clean and well-maintained helps prevent falls for all those who work there, including the custodian.