

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

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Slip, Trip and Fall accidents are being reported across all but a few of our work classifications, and tend to also be one of the leading injury causes for lost time producing accidents. While accidents related to “Caused by Student” out number Slip, Trip and Falls, the Slip, Trip and Falls are far more preventable.

The following are a few pointers, tips, considerations for addressing Slip, Trip and Fall incidents at NISD facilities.

Housekeeping – Each person having responsibility over a NISD worksite must insist on the sound housekeeping practices. Each facility should have a well communicated protocol for floor care to include handling spills and storage. The protocol should at a minimum address that staff is to take ownership of a spill by either alleviating the spill or protecting the area by cone, sign or warning tape until the hazard can be alleviated. Storage of materials in traffic areas should be addressed and discouraged.

Footwear – While footwear has taken on heightened fashion significance the true purpose of footwear is to be functional by protecting the foot. All footwear worn by NISD staff should be appropriate for the tasks at hand. Footwear needs to be of good construction so as to insure stability and provide adequate tread friction with surfaces to be encountered. The most comfortable and fashionable is not always the most practical.

Inspections – There is no substitute for vigilance. While the lion’s share of inspections will be made by Custodial staff, each location should have a systematic method to carry out periodic inspections of the facilities. Periodic inspections should be made to identify defective or worn flooring and other potential hazards with work orders submitted and areas protected. This is especially true for areas known to be prone to Slip, Trip and Fall incidents. Inspection of areas prone to hazardous conditions should be specifically assigned to staff, (after all, the task assigned to everyone is the task that does not get done).

Trip Hazard Alleviation – Cords should not be strung across walkways without the use of a cord protector. Uneven walking surfaces should be repaired or painted. Frayed carpet or defective flooring should be repaired or removed. Areas with changes in elevation need to be marked by having different color flooring, signs, hazard tape and/or handrails. Any floor mats need to be in good repair with beveled edges. Parking stops in pedestrian traffic ways should be painted.

Human Factor Issues – There are physiological components to addressing Slip, Trip and Fall injuries. It must be recognized and addressed that young people perceive a loss of balance quicker and are typically physically stronger and more able to prevent falling. Therefore, employees must be educated as to areas that are

prone to Slip, Trip and Fall hazards to raise overall general awareness. Employees should also be discouraged from carrying items that obstruct their forward view.

Lastly, should the unthinkable happen, and you find yourself falling here are a few tips to minimize injury. These will not transform anyone into a stunt double, but will help if you can keep your head even when you have lost your footing:

- Fall to the side - Tuck chin, turn head and raise arm in the direction of the fall. This will prevent your head from striking the ground.
- Falling backwards – Twist and roll the body. This will increase the chance of falling on your buttocks rather than on the back of your head.
- All falls – Keep wrists, elbows and knees bent. The goal is to have as much of the body strike the ground as possible so as to spread the impact.