

# North Dakota State University

## Slips, Trips, & Falls Program

### **I. Introduction**

The United States Department of Labor and North Dakota Risk Management accounts that slip, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry mishaps. Slips, trips and falls can occur anywhere and many associated risks can be influenced by individuals themselves, or those traveling or working in an area. Therefore, safety and prevention needs to begin with the individual. By outlining and following the recommended safe operating procedures, we learn to prevent injury and safeguard ourselves and our coworkers against a job related injury or death.

### **II. Purpose**

It is the policy of NDSU to provide our employees and visitors safe and healthy conditions in which they can conduct business, and to reduce the risk of occupational related injury or death due to slips, trips and falls.

### **III. Goals**

To strive to maintain a facility that is free from individual slip, trip and fall hazards. To ensure all employees know and understand the risks and safe operating procedures/policies involved with slips, trips and falls.

### **IV. Program Responsibilities**

#### **A. Employee Responsibilities**

Employees are responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with the program.

All employees will:

1. Recognize the circumstances and environments that contribute to slip, trip and fall hazards
2. Use the appropriate tools, equipment, material, procedures and designated footwear in the manner established by this program and their managers and supervisors
3. Keep work areas and travel routes free from slip, trip and fall hazards
4. Report hazards to supervisors or managers promptly for corrective action
5. Attend slip, trip and fall prevention training as required, and apply the knowledge and skills acquired to actual jobs and work activities
6. Report all injuries and near miss incidents to your supervisor promptly regardless of how serious the event
7. Make suggestions to your supervisor or management about changes you believe will improve employee safety
8. Participate in timely claims management strategies, including early and safe return to work
9. Report all incidents within 24 hours of their occurrence

B. Management Responsibilities

1. Ensure that sufficient employee time, supervisor support and funds are budgeted to carry out the safety program (safety equipment, training, etc.)
2. Evaluate supervisors each year to make sure they are carrying out their responsibilities as described in this program
3. Develop and implement written procedures to communicate safe work practices as warranted (e.g. equipment, apparel, activity and environmental expectations)

C. Administrator Responsibilities

1. Make certain employees performing walking and working surface inspections are properly trained
2. Ensure that control measures are implemented in a timely manner
3. Provide a system for employees to report slip, trip and fall hazards
4. Arrange for employee training and maintain training records
5. Maintain accurate records and be prepared to provide documentation upon request
6. Follow up with any slip, trip and fall solutions
7. Monitor the program

D. Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Recognize and prevent/address slip, trip and fall hazards in the area and work they oversee
2. Inform/educate/train employees to recognize and prevent slip, trip and fall hazards and injuries
3. Conduct hazard/incident investigation for root cause and prevention
4. Facilitate timely claims management strategies including early and safe return to work
5. Review department success in slip, trip and fall injury prevention annually, and change internal practices and procedures as warranted
6. Provide employees with proper equipment in good condition to safely execute tasks
7. Encourage reporting of all hazards and incidents as well as requests for assistance
8. Do a daily walk-around safety check of the work area and promptly correct any hazards you find
9. Keep and maintain records and/or documentation on safety (e.g. training, incident, inspections and equipment logs)
10. Attend slip, trip and fall program training to become knowledgeable with the elements of the program
11. Investigate all incidents in your area and report your findings to management
12. Make certain that recommended controls are implemented and/or used appropriately through active follow-up

- E. Facilities Management/Building Managers
  - 1. Recognize and prevent/address slip, trip and fall hazards in the area they oversee
  - 2. Ensure any occupants, contractors or vendors do not create slip, trip and fall hazards in the course of operations
  - 3. Immediately report issues to Facilities Management and ensure the issues are addressed in a timely manner
  
- F. Housekeeping
  - 1. Use barricades when the floor they are working on is slippery or presents a tripping hazard. Barricades will be removed as soon as the hazard is corrected
  - 2. Place non-skid mats at building entrances during inclement weather
  - 3. Expediently communicate facility issues to Facility Management and/or third party responsible for maintenance of building and grounds

## **V. Procedure**

### **A. Slips**

Slips are a loss of balance caused by too little friction between your feet and the surface you walk or work on. This loss of traction is the leading cause of workplace slips. Slips can be caused by constantly wet surfaces, spills or weather hazards like ice and snow. Slips are more likely to occur when you hurry or run, wear the wrong kind of shoes or don't pay attention to where you are walking. Follow these safety precautions to avoid a slip:

- 1. Practice safe walking skills. If you must walk on wet surfaces, take short steps to keep your center of balance under you and point your feet slightly outward. Move slowly and pay attention to the surface you are walking on.
- 2. Clean up spills right away. Whenever you see any kind of spill, clean it up yourself or report it to the appropriate person. Even minor spills can be very hazardous.
- 3. Do not let grease accumulate on a kitchen floor or a shop floor around machinery. If grease is present in your work area, be sure that it is cleaned up promptly.
- 4. Ice and snow present especially hazardous walking surfaces. When possible, remove ice and snow from sidewalks and parking lots before heavy traffic use, and wear proper footwear for the conditions.
- 5. Wearing proper footwear can help reduce slips. Choose a soft sole for smooth or wet floor surfaces, and a harder sole for rough or textured floors. Flip flops are not appropriate footwear in the workplace.

### **B. Trips**

Trips occur whenever your foot hits an object and you are moving with enough momentum to be thrown off balance. A trip can happen when your work area is cluttered, lighting is poor, or when an area has loose footing. Trips are more likely to happen when you are in a hurry and do not pay attention to where you are going.

Common rules to follow to avoid tripping can include:

1. Watch where you are going, and carry only loads that you can see over.
2. Keep work areas well lit. Turned-off lights and burned-out bulbs can interfere with your ability to see clearly. Do not grope in the dark. Use a flashlight or extension light to make your walking area visible.
3. Keep your work area clean and do not clutter aisles or stairs. Store materials and tools in closets, cabinets, or specially assigned storage areas.
4. Arrange furniture and keep file drawers closed so that they do not interfere with walkways or pedestrian traffic in your area.
5. When using the stairs, take one stair at a time and use the hand rail to support yourself.
6. Temporary extension cords or power tool cords can be dangerous tripping hazards. Tape them to the floor or arrange them so that they will not be in the way for pedestrians.
7. Eliminate hazards due to loose footing on stairs, steps and floors. Report loose carpeting, stair treads or hand rails immediately. Broken pavement and floor boards or loose floor tiles can also catch a foot and cause a fall. These issues need to be reported to Facilities Management immediately at 231-7911.

#### C. Falls

Falls occur whenever you move too far off your center of balance. Slips and trips often push you off your center of balance far enough to cause a fall, but there are many other ways to fall. Falls are also caused by makeshift ladders, misuse of ladders, accidents while climbing, and improper scaffolding use. Most falls are slips or trips at ground level, but falls from greater heights pose a much higher risk of serious injury. Avoid falls of any kind with these safety measures:

1. Do no jump. Lower yourself carefully from docks, trucks, or work stages.
2. Check lighting. Make sure hallways, stairs, and work areas are properly lit.
3. Repair or replace stairs or handrails that are loose or broken. Report these types of hazards to the proper personnel.
4. Do not store things on stairs or in aisles.
5. Wear good shoes. Non-skid soles are a good choice. Remember that high heels or platforms are less stable than flat shoes.
6. Always use proper equipment when you have to work at a higher level. Never use chairs or any other unstable equipment to reach higher.
7. For falls from heights, please visit the following links:

[Fall Protection Program](#)

[Ladder Safety](#)

[Scaffolding](#)

## **VI. Training**

Training in the recognition and control of walking/working surface hazards and safe work practices will be given as follows:

- A. All new employees during orientation
- B. All employees annually
- C. The minimum training for all managers, supervisors and employees will include the following elements:
  1. An explanation of the slips, trips and falls program and their role in the program
  2. A description of walking/working surface hazards and unsafe work practices that may contribute to slip and fall accidents
  3. The importance of reporting walking/working surface hazards to management and the forms and process for reporting and investigating slip and fall hazards
  4. The methods used to minimize slip and fall risk factors (including engineering controls, administrative controls and any appropriate personal protective equipment or footwear)
  5. Training must be documented
  6. The training program will include the following topics
    - a. Review of the Slip, Trip and Fall Program
    - b. Slip, trip and fall occurrence data
    - c. Hazard identification
      - Changes in elevation
      - Uneven walkways
      - Improper floor types
      - Protrusions
      - Mats and rugs
      - Weather-related tasks
      - Drainage problems
      - Possible solutions
      - Proper use of wet floor signage
    - d. Reporting procedures

## **VII. Safety Rules**

The following basic safety rules have been established to help us prevent slip, trip and fall accidents. These rules are in addition to safety rules that must be followed when doing particular jobs or operating certain equipment.

- A. Always take the proper safety precautions before doing a job. If a job is unsafe, report it to your supervisor. A safer way to do the job will be found.
- B. Horseplay, running and fighting are prohibited.
- C. Clean up spills immediately. Replace all tools and supplies after use.
- D. Keep tools or materials out of designated walkways.
- E. Protect all spill areas. If needed, get someone to help clean up the spill or guard the spill while you get the necessary equipment to clean the spill.

- F. If you see a slip or trip hazard do something about it. It's the responsibility of everyone to identify and control hazards.
- G. Make sure scraps don't accumulate where they will become a hazard. Good housekeeping helps prevent injuries.
- H. Proper footwear is an important component of our slip, trip and fall prevention program. Footwear needs to be appropriate for the task. In many of the work areas other than our offices, high heeled shoes and leather soled shoes are considered unsafe and must be avoided. It is the responsibility of each employee to obtain and maintain slip resistant footwear in a serviceable condition. Supervisors will ensure that employees are wearing appropriate slip resistant footwear at all times in the workplace.
- I. Use special care when entering and exiting vehicles; use the vehicle for support.
- J. Walk in designated walkways. Taking shortcuts over snow piles and other frozen areas can be hazardous.
- K. Hold on to hand rails when using stairs or ramps.
- L. Do not use chairs and tables as ladders.
- M. Cover and/or use guardrails to protect from open wall, pits, tanks, vats, ditches, etc.
- N. Mats and runners will be used to provide slip resistance. It is everyone's responsibility to monitor mats and runners to ensure they continue to provide proper slip resistance and have not become a tripping hazard. Where mats have been used to control wet areas, either entry ways to the building or wet processes, the following conditions require immediate action:
  - 1. If pedestrian traffic leaves wet foot prints when stepping off the mat, the mat needs to be replaced with a dry one or an additional mat needs to be placed at the end of the first mat.
  - 2. If the mat has become wrinkled or bunched up it needs to be reset so it is flat and doesn't present a tripping hazard.
- O. Seasonal issues create unique weather-related conditions for which the following procedures have been developed:
  - 1. All building entrances will be cleaned of snow and ice, and will be treated with salt prior to the opening of business.
  - 2. Exterior walkways will be inspected hourly and treated as needed.
  - 3. Document the work that is completed and time it was done.
  - 4. During the fall, daily inspections will be made and action taken as needed to ensure walkways are cleared of leaves and debris.
- P. Remind yourself to slow down and pay attention. Be aware of your surroundings and watch where you are going
- Q. Accident investigation procedures will be followed for all incident reports.
  - 1. Every incident will be investigated and analyzed to identify the root cause. The following steps will be taken when an accident occurs:

- a. Helping the injured person will be the primary concern immediately following an accident. Never leave the person alone. If assistance is needed send someone else or have someone stay with the person while you get help.
- b. If the injured party is not an employee, do not admit liability or fault for the accident.
- c. Protect the accident scene to prevent anyone else from getting hurt and to preserve the accident scene in an “as is” condition to help ensure an accurate investigation.
- d. Information will be collected and the analysis completed using the “Accident Investigation Report.”
- e. Photos need to be taken of the general area looking for defective conditions and/or anything else that could be considered a contributing factor of the accident.
- f. Once the root cause is determined, corrective action will be initiated immediately following standard procedure.

R. Corrective Maintenance

When a hazard has been identified through inspection, maintenance must be notified so that the problem can be corrected. The following is the procedure to accomplish this task:

1. The problem will be communicated to the supervisor immediately.
2. The maintenance manager will inspect the problem and communicate the best action to take.
3. A temporary control will be put in place to prevent anyone from being injured if it can't be corrected immediately.

S. Workplace Inspection Policy and Procedures

Our goal is to ensure a safe, clean and hazard free environment for employees and the public. Workplace inspections will be conducted to identify and correct potential safety and health hazards.

1. Inspections will be carried out by supervisors of their functional area.
2. Any deficiencies or hazards must be acted upon to remove the hazard, warn of it or close off the area in question.
3. Three types of inspections may be used and each type of inspection has its own purpose.

a. Annual Inspections

Once a year the Safety Office will do a wall-to-wall walk through inspection of the entire worksite. The results of this inspection will be used to:

- Eliminate or control obvious hazards
- Target specific work areas for more intensive investigation
- Assist in revising the checklists used during periodic safety inspections

- b. Change of Operations  
Changes include new equipment, changes to production processes or a change to the building structure or premises. Examine the changed conditions and make recommendations to eliminate or control any hazards that were or may be created as a result of the change.
- c. Periodic Safety Inspections  
Supervisors or their appointees will inspect their work areas for hazards. The results of the periodic inspections and any action taken will be documented.

### **VIII. Program Review**

At least annually, the Safety Office will conduct a program review to assess the progress and success of the Slip, Trips and Falls Program. The review must consist of the following:

- A. Evaluation of the training programs and records
- B. The need for retraining of managers, supervisors and employees
- C. The jobs, processes or areas that have produced a high incidence rate of slip, trips and fall accidents
- D. Responsiveness in correcting reported slip and fall hazards
- E. The program's success will be determined and reported to upper management and the Loss Control Committee based upon comparison to previous years

Preventing slips, trips and falls is a task that depends on many factors, most importantly, you. You may not be able to change your workplace, but you can recognize dangers, work to eliminate hazards, and use safety devices and equipment. For more information see *NDSU Safe Operating Procedure – Fall Protection*.